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Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

TRACK NOTES

The Cobberas
Reedy Creek
Chasm

GEAR SURVEYS

Boots
Headtorches

BUSHWALKING

The Cobberas
and the Pilot

The Blue
Mountains
before the flood

Girraween
Eldon Bluff

Getting into
canyoning

The tallest
trees

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04



Spring
(Oct-Dec) 2002, no 86
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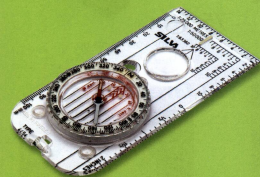
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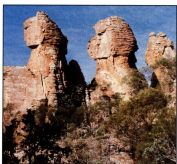


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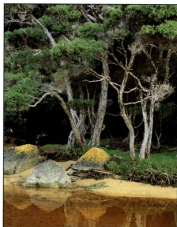
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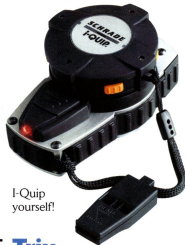
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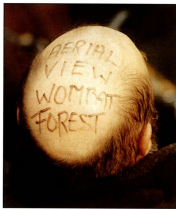


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Cover Emma Reardon in Carra Beanga Canyon, the Blue Mountains, New South Wales.
Lucas Trihey

WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



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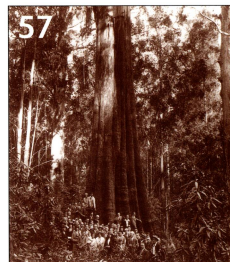
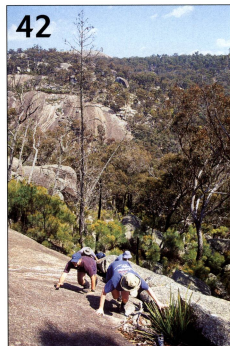
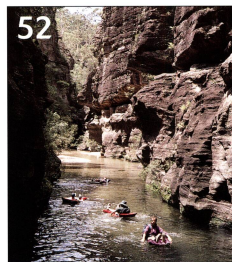
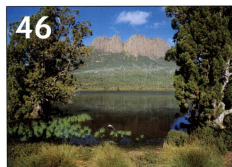
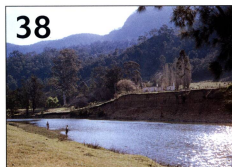
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Wild ones

The 2002 Wild Readership Survey

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Design & production Bruce Godden
Consultants Michael Collier, Brian Walters SC

Contributing Editors
Stephen Bunting *Caving*
John Chapman *Track notes*
Michael Hampton *Cross-country skiing*

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Andrew Cox, Geoff Law,
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Contributions, preferably well illustrated with slides, are welcome. *Guidelines for Contributors* are available at www.wild.com.au

Whenever possible, written submissions should be supplied on a three-and-a-half-inch floppy disk in either PC or Mac format. Please specify which format, program and version number. Hard copy should also be supplied. If not on disk, submissions should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of sheets of A4 paper. Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage.

Names and addresses should be written on disks, manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, no responsibility is accepted for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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WILD READERSHIP SURVEYS ARE ALWAYS exciting for us. They're a bit like our school reports, and waiting for what they tell us produces a similar mixture of hopeful expectation and a trace of anxiety. All the more so this time as the previous survey was four years ago, which is a long time in the life of a magazine!

For this year's survey we tried a different approach. Rather than inserting it in the magazine, we put the survey questionnaire on the *Wild* Web site. This had the effect of slightly reducing the response rate and, no doubt, affected the type of response we received, but we were interested to see how the results from this source compared with those from the previous, traditional, survey-distribution method. It seems that not much has changed.

First, who are you? *Wild* readers are still mostly male (74 per cent), but the percentage of female readers continues to grow. You're certainly well heeled—almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of *Wild* readers are in the professions, managers/executives or self-employed. The same percentage have a tertiary qualification. Not surprisingly, 21 per cent earn more than \$70 000 a year. Thirty-nine per cent are aged from 25 to thirty-four.

When it comes to activities, you are still mostly bushwalkers (75 per cent). More than a third (35 per cent) trek overseas, and a similar—and significant—number (30 per cent) intend to try it for the first time in the next two years.

When it comes to *Wild* itself—in a word—you love it! Ninety-two per cent keep every copy for reference. Half (50 per cent) read every page and 48 per cent look carefully through, stopping and reading items of special interest. Almost one-third think that *Wild* has improved in recent years (four per cent think it's got worse). Eighty-nine per cent think that *Wild*'s content is 'about right' instead of too 'gung ho' or too basic. Eighty-eight per cent think that *Wild*'s content is 'satisfactory' instead of too heavy or too superficial. And 83 per cent think that *Wild*'s stance on conservation is 'about right' instead of too hard-line or too soft. It seems that you even like my Editorials! More than one-third (35 per cent) of you usually agree with their contents, with everyone else sometimes disagreeing but not minding as they think the Editorials should present the argument anyway. Perhaps I'm mellowing in my old age; I'll have to see what I can do about that...

Thanks go to the many readers who completed and submitted readership surveys and answered all 50 questions. We promised gift packages (each containing a *Wild* binder and five back issues of the winner's choice). The

following are the winners: Dean Allen, Kilsyth, Vic; Chris Bashford, St Leonards, NSW; David Beasley, Girralong, NSW; Simon Beckett, Wendouree, Vic; Geoffrey Day, Blackmans Bay, Tas; John Duffy, St Pauls, NSW; Max Fry, Cobram, Vic; Jim Happ, Ringwood, Vic; David Hopcott, Peregian Beach, Qld; MJ Hunter, Strathalbyn, SA; Philippa Lohmeyer, Brunswick, Vic; Laura McBride, Kenmore, Qld; Jenni McGlenon, Grange, SA; James McIntosh, Tarragindi, Qld; Adam McKiernan, Grovedale, Vic; Anita Menhofer, Bellingen, NSW; David Riddell, Frenchville, NSW; Chris Peritt, Pyrmont, NSW; Jason Vickery, Braddon, ACT; Sarah Wise, Sth Yunderup, WA.

Boots and all

Winners of the *Wild* subscription offer announced in *Wild* no 84, who each won a pair of Ecco Receptor shoes (valued at \$199 a pair), were: Trevor Cooper, Langford, WA; Brad McAuliffe, Bradbury, NSW; Kirsty McPhail, Carlingford, NSW; Rob Mutton, Naracoote, SA; Jennifer Powell, Hawthorn, Vic; Ian West, Hazelbrook, NSW. Congratulations to all these people, who won after (re)subscribing for three years.

Wild people

After more than four years at Wild Peta Coats has left to travel overseas. Starting 'at the bottom', she quickly proved her worth and became office manager, with particular responsibility for our IT system. She will not easily be replaced. We welcome her successor, Tom Burke, to Wild. 

Chris Baxter

Chris Baxter OAM

In the Queen's Birthday Honours List, Chris Baxter, founder and Managing Editor of *Wild* and *Reck*, received the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for 'service to environmental journalism, through the promotion of wilderness activities and protection of the environment'.

The award recognises the inspiration Chris has given to thousands, particularly through *Wild* and *Reck*, into which he has poured so much creativity. Chris's strong stance on the environment, and his celebration of Australia's wild places and those who go into them, has been of great benefit to the wider Australian community.

Brian Walters



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Bleating litigants

HAVING JUST READ CHRIS BAXTER'S excellent Editorial in *Wild* no 84 I cannot but wholeheartedly agree. I have long had an interest and experience in outdoors pursuits and I am becoming increasingly concerned at the simplistic mind-set of people who seek to blame anybody but themselves for their misfortune—be it an act of God, an unforeseen incident or a stuff-up on their own part. They cast around for a 'no win-no fee' lawyer and launch an expensive lawsuit against the nearest sucker upon whom some aspect of blame may be fixed!

Already we are seeing some of the fruits of this liability nightmare; for example, horse-riding businesses being forced to close because of a lack of continuing insurance cover. How long until you have to sign a legal waiver before entering a National Park? Insurance premiums are on the rise everywhere including the house, car and pet varieties, as insurers rightfully try to recover their rising costs (and preserve their profit margins).

It seems a few people have succeeded in suing (with the assistance of a smart lawyer) for outrageous amounts of money which, in the end, comes out of all our pockets...

Life is hazardous—that's part of the risk of living. I wish all the litigants who bleat 'it's not my fault' would stay away from the outdoors and leave it to those of us who understand, accept and manage the risks that we take in our activities. I don't want a sanitised, 'safe' outdoors; I just want the uncluttered reality of nature. If you don't like it, stay in your comfort zone with the telly remote close by and watch from a safe distance.

Murray Gill
(by email)

I am currently a secondary school student and an avid reader of your marvellous publication. After being asked to research an environmental issue for class I referred to your Editorial 'Paying the Price' by Chris Baxter in *Wild* no 84. I agree fully with his opinion that litigation has gone too far and that we are literally 'suing ourselves off the face of the earth'. When does the environment become overcontrolled? It has always been the uncontrollable nature of the wilderness that has been its greatest draw card. Now we see ourselves altering it, simply for the purpose of ensuring the 'safety' of unintelligent tourists. This must stop before outdoors activities are strangled by the cost of insurance and the risk of injury.

Tim Dunstall
(by email)

Bush scraps

First of all, congratulations on such a fantastic magazine! I have been a subscriber now for the past year or so and continually use the magazine as a resource for my Outdoor Education degree at Victoria University.

I am writing as I wish to express my feelings about a recent trip, over the Easter break, to the Howqua River, Victoria; in particular the Sheep-yard Flat area.

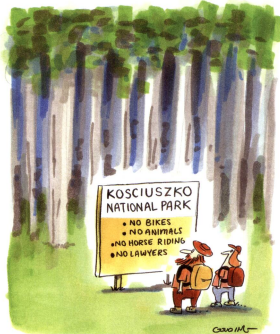
I was astounded to find the area crawling with people and, just to let readers know

of common courtesy from other canyons. We all accept that canyons can be dangerous and that you have to be responsible for yourself. That is why I always travel with two or more people, carry suitable clothing, first aid, navigation equipment, spare rope and slings (no bolts). Yet there is always a first time to do a new canyon and if you come across another group I see no harm in asking for safety advice or guidance.

Unfortunately, I have of late encountered what can only be described as elitist attitudes from what are clearly the more 'experienced' leaders of other groups. Some barely say hello, let alone offer direction or safety advice. I have often been made to feel that I had no right to be there. Don't these people enjoy meeting new, like-minded friends? Just because someone has done that canyon many times before doesn't mean that others cannot enjoy it, responsibly, for the first time. Wouldn't everyone consider it dangerous to let someone do the wrong thing?

Please remember, no one has a monopoly on the bush. It is there to share so why not help each other out?

Michael Duffy
(by email)



A load of sawdust

As a professional forester, I was disturbed by the ill-founded anti-logging sentiment expressed in Green Pages (*Wild* no 84).

As the concept of ceasing to produce timber from our native forests is largely reliant on the popular notion that there are alternate sources of supply, it is important to highlight some significant omissions from the report on plantation expansion. While our plantation estate may have increased dramatically since 1994, at least 95 per cent of those established in Victoria are being grown on short rotations for wood-chips. They will not provide the alternative saw-log supplies required to replace what is currently logged from the State's native forests.

Even in States where a substantial hardwood saw-log plantation resource is being developed it will take decades to significantly replace native-forest timber production.

Supporters of the campaign to close our native-forest timber industry should therefore carefully consider its implications for the world's forests. In Australia, timber production from native forests is limited in extent (only 25 per cent of Victoria's forests are available) with strong environmental protection constraints. We have none of the corruption and illegal logging that is decimating forests in

what was going in, here are a few examples:

- Electric-fenced horse enclosures wrapped around trees
- Trail bikes ripping up the area
- People washing dishes in the river
- A man and his son chain-sawed a small tree down, presumably for firewood
- Pit toilets that were almost overflowing
- The disposal of food scraps in the river
- Large families with generators running until all hours of the morning...

If these things happen in areas such as the beautiful Howqua, what is to become of natural areas in the future? People perceive these areas to be everlasting...

Luke Walshe
(by email)

I am passionate about the outdoors and love nothing more than visiting canyons in the Blue Mountains. I have been doing so every year since 1994. However, on several occasions I have been dismayed by the lack

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neighbouring countries lacking government control. Transferring our society's demand for timber from our own forests on to such countries would only exacerbate their existing problems.

From the viewpoint of tropical rainforest conservation, the success of anti-logging campaigns in developed countries such as Australia would be a tragedy. Is that what *Wild* readers really want?

Mark Poynter
Arlington, Vic

Contrary to Poynter's letter, above, Australia can choose not to log native forests without adding stress to our neighbours' forests. We have the opportunity to meet virtually all our sawn timber and paper needs from existing plantations and recycling, now.

Half a century ago, hardwood from native forests accounted for about 80 per cent of Australia's sawn timber production. Today, only 30 per cent is hardwood (virtually all from native forests); the rest is softwood (95 per cent plantation). Saw-logs from Australia's softwood plantations—established because foresters in the late 1950s/early 1960s lobbied for them—are processed into various sawn timbers and engineered beams. They have been steadily displacing native-forest hardwoods in most uses for decades. The end-game is in sight—softwood plantations are expected to be fully on stream by 2005.

The substitution expectation is the high-quality end of the decorative hardwood market. After 15 years' encouragement to shift the Central Highlands industry into this market, only two per cent of the region's native-forest log cut is sold as appearance-sawn timber: three quarters is wood-chipped and the rest (minus sawdust and shavings) is sold as commodity-sawn timber competing substantially against softwood plantation products.

Judy Clark
Postdoctoral Fellow
Centre for Resource and
Environmental Studies
Australian National University
Canberra, ACT

Join the club

Thank you for your alliance with the Wilderness Society and for making issues of environmental conservation so important in your magazine. If it hadn't been for your support and promotion of TWS I would never have joined. I urge other readers to join as well.

Keep up the good work.

Mark McLennan
Bendigo, Vic

A huge drag

I enjoyed reading 'A Highway of Sand: Tracking the Macdonald River' by Sven Klinge and Anthony Dunk in *Wild* no 84. However, I do not believe, as does the Soil Conservation Service, that the phenomenon of river-choking sand has been caused by logging and clearing in the upstream catch-

ments. It may be that some sedimentation has affected the downstream end of the river but I believe the river of sand is of natural occurrence.

I have been in the headwaters of the Macdonald, above the Putty Road, where it originates in the Hunter Range. The river there is a typical stream cutting through mountain sandstone: ferns grow among stones in the creek which moves between shallow pools and pebble beds. Then, very suddenly all this is replaced by the river of sand described in the article. Some of this part of the catchment has been logged but there has not been any clear-felling or clearing for agriculture and no evidence of stumping or sheet erosion.

The volume of sand carried in the bed of the Macdonald is of staggering proportions. The reason is its accumulation at a rate at least as great as its downstream dispersion. Being in a low-rainfall part of the mountains, the river does not have sufficient water to scour the sand from its rocky substrate. The Colo River, with its bigger catchment and greater stream velocity, regularly gouges the accumulated sand from its bed during peak flood periods, heaping it into steep-sided beaches, forming deep pools and leaving exposed boulder jumbles and logjams in the rapid sequences.

The Macdonald does not have the requisite momentum: the sand sits, much of it under the surface in suspension, the water slowly moving through it as though in a long capillary. When the Macdonald does flood, because of the massive sand bed, a large amount of water is absorbed, further decreasing the stream's erosive power. In that way the river acts as a huge drag upon itself.

Col Gibson
Fairfield, NSW

Blinkered political correctness

Congratulations for publishing 'The Quest' (*Wild* no 82). However, you deserve many more congratulations for the mature way in which you have reacted to the attacks by zealots.

Most bushwalkers would not dream of breaking the rules. But that does not mean that we don't want to read about it. As in any field or sport, the actions of renegades often make good reading.

The venomous letters you bravely published all had one common thread running through them—that of censorship. *Wild* in no way condoned or advocated what the Quest group did. If the letter-writers could see past their blinkered political correctness, they would have seen the article for what it was—a well-written and entertaining piece about an illegal adventure. Let the majority of readers—clear-thinking, mature lovers of the outdoors—make up their own minds.

Rob Pfeffer
Bulimba, Qld

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, VIC 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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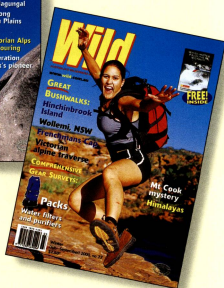
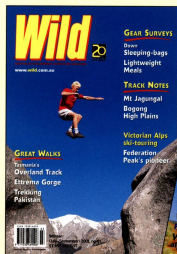
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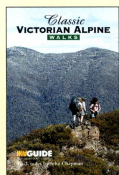
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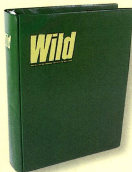


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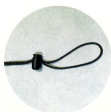
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MANASLU

The expedition to Nepal's Manaslu (8156 metres) took about 18 months to plan. Its aim was to make a safe first Australian ascent of one of the two 8000 metre peaks then unclimbed by Australians (Annapurna I is the other). The team comprised Geoff Robb, Brian Laursen, Andrew Peacock, George Lloyd, Greg Mortimer, Nawang Sherpa and Nima Sherpa.

Australian party members arrived in Kathmandu in mid-April and walked around the north side of the Manaslu massif to avoid Maoists and to become acclimatised by crossing the 5000 metre Larkya Pass which bounds the northern flanks. Wives, children and family friends walked in with the group, then flew from Base Camp by helicopter—the same chopper carried in all expedition food and climbing gear.

The expedition party set up a proper mountain base camp at 4700 metres in late April. Three camps—and three weeks—later they were on the summit—five of them: Robb, Laursen, Peacock, Mortimer and Nawang Sherpa. The climb was technically quite straightforward but there was a lot of soft snow down low and it was dangerous in the middle reaches (between Camp 1 and Camp 2) where large seracs seem to hover over the route. Laursen and Mortimer had a 45-second gap between life and annihilation when the biggest of the seracs collapsed in front of them.

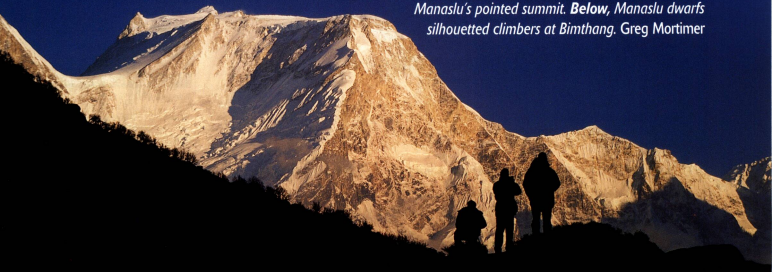
There were a few beautiful days—clear, mild and still. The fantastic summit is composed of two very small, steep rock pinnacles, the only technical climbing on the route. The party didn't quite make the first Australian ascent because Andrew Lock decided to run in ahead and arrived first.

See the Web site www.manaslu.blogspot.com for more details of the expedition.

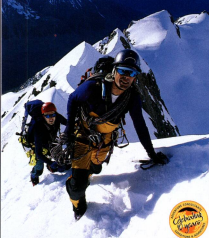
Greg Mortimer



Above, Andrew Peacock, left, and Brian Laursen on Manaslu's pointed summit. Below, Manaslu dwarfs silhouetted climbers at Bimthang. Greg Mortimer



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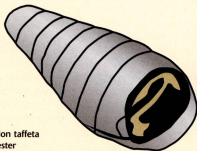


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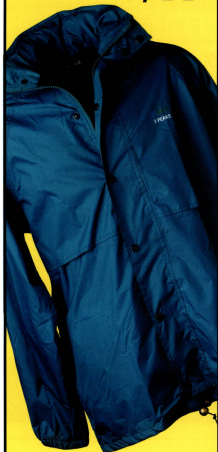
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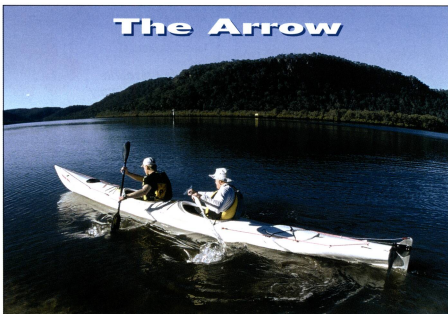
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Elyne Mitchell

Pioneer Snowy Mountains skier, environmentalist and author Elyne Mitchell died on 4 March, aged 88. Mitchell was profiled in *Wild* no 38. Her poem 'Caruthers Peak, March 1989' appeared in *Wild* no 41. Mitchell's husband Tom was a former Australian and New Zealand downhill ski champion. He died in 1984 and was given a State funeral. Although not introduced to skiing until after her marriage to Tom, Elyne became the Canadian national downhill champion in 1938 and was Victorian champion the following year. The Mitchells' property

overlooks the infant Murray River below the western face of the Snowy Mountains. Elyne made the Snowy Mountains famous worldwide in her 15 *Silver Brumby* books. However, her first book was *Australia's Alps* (1942), written after an extensive ski tour on the western face of the Snowies in 1941. In the book she describes the region and Australian skiing at the time. She wrote at least two further books about her beloved Snowy Mountains. Mitchell was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (for service to literature) in 1990.

The Arrow



Hugh Morrison, front, and Ron Anderson working hard on the Hawkesbury River, NSW, during the Arrow cross-Tasman adventure series. Mark Watson

The second race in the Arrow cross-Tasman adventure series was on 22-23 June in Yengo and Woomera National Parks, NSW. Unlike during the first race, in Victoria, snow did not fall; the Hawkesbury River was like a sheet of glass under a cloudless sky.

The gruelling 180 kilometre course required fitness and navigation skills.

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All but three teams finished the course and times ranged from 15 to 24 hours. The team known as the Halva Boys won the competition, closely followed by the team Checkpoint.

Mark Watson

New Loos with more than just a view

Parks Victoria recently installed two new toilets adjacent to Cleve Cole and Federation Huts at Mts Bogong and Feathertop, respectively. Located in remote and extremely sensitive alpine environments, both huts are popular. In an attempt to minimise the risk to visitors and the environment, the original pit toilets have been replaced with composting toilets. As indicated by John Chapman in *Wild* no 84, the composting

toilets are relatively large and are close to the huts.

In each toilet four cubicles have been built over two separate composting chambers. At any one time only one composting chamber (two toilet cubicles) is available for use. When the chamber reaches capacity it is closed so that the effluent can break down and the other two cubicles and chamber are opened.

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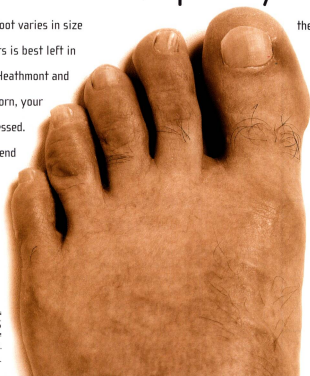
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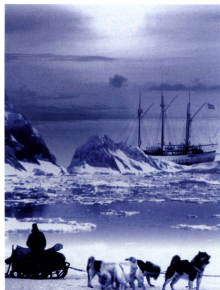
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The toilets must be close to the existing huts to ensure that visitors use them but they should not occupy sites otherwise available for camping. They must also be accessible by existing tracks.

Parks Victoria

Pole vault

Following the report in *Info* in *Wild* no 85 about Eric Philips and Jon Muir trekking to the North Pole 'unassisted', clarification is necessary regarding the style of their trip. It is a generally accepted convention that 'unassisted' trips to the Pole require that all supplies are carried (as was done by Philips and Muir) and that the trip start from an island off the coast of Siberia or Canada. Allegedly the hardest parts of the trip are the first 100 kilometres or so where fractured ice creates lanes of open water. Most parties attempting this section are defeated by the conditions or, if they get through, are delayed for so long that they cannot meet the deadline for safe aircraft pick-up from the North Pole in mid-May. Philips and Muir flew about 60 kilometres over this section before starting their trek. Graeme Joy had trekked the entire distance (and is still the only Australian to have done so) when he reached the North Pole in 1989 but he was resupplied *en route*.

SCROGGIN

✦ The **Milton-Ulladulla Apex Club**, NSW, has **EPIRBs for hire** at the Milton Rite-way supermarket for use in the area. Contact Neale Pryor for more information. Phone (02) 4455 4256 or email nealep@hotkey.net.au

✦ The **high death rate of porters in the Himalayas, Africa and the Andes** is due to exploitation by Western travel companies, reported the *Melbourne Age* on 1 July. Many porters die from altitude sickness and hypothermia because companies employing them fail to provide adequate equipment.

✦ **Bush Maps Victoria** has recently released a new (fourth) issue of its **Croajingolong National Park map**. It has been updated with information and corrections from Parks Victoria, the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and bushwalkers. 📄

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

Corrections and amplifications

Regarding the article on caving by Stephen Bunton in *Wild* no 85, the following notes have been supplied: Phil Hill's name was misspelled in a caption and Stephen Bunton first bottomed Khazad-dum in 1977, not 1972. In amplification, a new 'deep cave' was recently added to the list: Shooting Star is 241 metres deep, putting it in tenth place behind Owl Pot (which itself was not in the correct order in the table).

In the article entitled 'The Blue Breaks' by Meg McKone in *Wild* no 85, the following corrections should be noted: the photo caption on page 48 should refer to Lacy's Tableland instead of Axhead Mountain. The photo credited to John Cooper in fact depicts Cooper; the photographer was McKone. In the second paragraph of the same article 'my favourite day walk' should read 'my favourite day's walk'.

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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| 7-9 National October Outdoor Trade Show, Melbourne (traders only) | Vic (03) 9879 8671 |
| 19 Spring 12 hr RL | SA (08) 8271 2712 |
| 19 Spring 12 hr RL | WA (08) 9342 9213 |
| 19 8/12 hr RL | Vic (03) 9438 6626 |
| 19-20 24 hr NSW Championships RL | NSW (02) 9990 3480 |
| 19-20 6/12/24 hr and Queensland Championships RL | Qld (07) 3369 0880 |
| 28-28 Adelaide Oxtan Trailwalker 100 km team walk B | SA (08) 8223 3405 |
| 27 Red Cross Yarra Challenge 250 m canoe relay sprint C | Vic (03) 8327 7706 |

November

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 14-17 Mountain Designs Bitbulbun Team Challenge Final M | WA (08) 9481 0551 |
| 16-17 Maximum Adventure Race Series event three M | NSW 0403 820 282 |
| 24 6 hr Social RL | NSW (02) 9990 3480 |

December

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 7 6 hr (bike/foot) RL | Vic (03) 9438 6626 |
| 26-31 Red Cross Murray Marathon C | Vic/NSW (03) 8327 7706 |

January

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 2-7 Under Way—the 24th Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation | WA (08) 9470 3023 |
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Rights of passage

The eternal significance of place, by *Quentin Chester*



Silent sentinels, the Lost City, Queensland. Karl Erett

'AND SO, WHAT DO YOU BELEAF IN?' ASKED the shirtless stranger standing over me. He cut quite a dash with his tanned torso and mustard-yellow shorts. A black leather day pack completed the ensemble. He looked decidedly European, a lowlander perhaps, and we happened to be sharing a rock slab in Kata Tjuta (aka the Olgas).

His question didn't exactly come out of the blue. I had been lying there when he bowed up and began to grumble. 'Why do I have to stay on this liddle trail?' he asked. 'Why is it so?' I tried to explain the significance of the area to the local Anangu men. 'And they're not too keen on people wandering all over the place', I added. 'It's kind of sacred'. But I could tell he didn't get it.

And that's when he popped the 'beleaf' question. I was unsure whether he was testing my Anangu allegiances or making a broader spiritual enquiry. So I fudged a little: 'Oh, I don't know—places like this I guess.' This was not the desired answer. My inquisitor looked agitated. For a moment his head seemed to quiver and after a tense silence he turned and trotted off into the Valley of the Winds.

Long after the stranger had gone his question remained, like a stone in my boot.

I took to the track again, pacing myself to avoid any other passer-by with interrogation in mind. It was a subdued, overcast morning and the track through the gorge climbed to a narrow saddle. From here the view opened to the east revealing a sprawling congregation of domes—the 'heads many' that is Kata Tjuta.

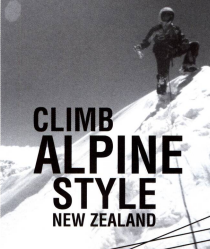
This is a land of marvels. With their clefts of shadow these shapely desert tors brought to mind other stone-scapes—from the plateau country of Arnhem Land to the pagoda formations of the Blue Mountains. It is a view that inspires awe spiked with a nameless fear—more or less what Wordsworth and friends had in mind when they tossed about words like 'sublime'.

Of course, such places are not themselves the stuff of belief—at least not for me, not any more. But they are an excellent starting point and sometimes the things that happen out there also make you ponder odd questions. Such as why do people in the bush—including friends, complete strangers

and even oneself—feel emboldened to ask such big questions?

Later that day I drove back towards Uluru. From a distance I could see the buses at the base of the rock, the queues for the toilets and an unbroken line of figures soldiering to the summit. To the locals these climbers are 'minga' or ants, which is how they appear from afar. I continued to Mutitjulu, the water-hole on the south side of Uluru. A desert wind scuffed swirls of dust and grit across the car park. On my way to the track I passed a family of three in a new, burgundy four-wheel drive. They just sat there staring at the rock, seemingly trapped in a stony silence.

I regard Uluru as one of the strangest places to which I've ever been. Strange not so much because of what it is but for the cultural confusion that seems to multiply before your eyes. It's a site of deep traditions that go to the heart of Anangu life and law. At the same time, Uluru is also a tourist shrine, a kind of dead-heart Disneyland with resorts, sunset worship, helicopter rides and Harley tours.



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For me, the only way through this mish-mash is to walk. It was late afternoon by the time I left Mutitjulu, heading east on the circuit track. A couple was ahead in the distance but there didn't appear to be anyone behind me. I took comfort from finding a way to be alone while everyone else was jostling to watch the sundown channel on the opposite side of the rock.

The track passed close to Uluru's south-eastern flanks and the monstrous bulk of rock loomed larger than ever, its ribs and steep shoulders darkening with each stride. Out among the mulga scrub I could see shapes moving—euros silhouetted in the grainy dusk. As the track turned to the north another shape appeared, this time a person skulking away from the rock itself. As I approached, the stranger was crouched

railing against the bus loads who climb the rock in spite of the wishes of the Anangu. He looked to the hand-rail chains leading up the rock. 'Bloody rubberneck wankers,' he bellowed to the night.

At this point I was tempted to ask why exactly he had been worried that I might be a ranger and what he'd been doing when I'd first seen him near an important men's site, an area out of bounds to the public. Tiredness and cowardice got the better of me and in truth I was grateful to walk in silence for the last couple of kilometres. On the drive back to the camping ground Jeff talked about his plans to walk the Larapinta Trail. 'Thanks heaps for the lift. I'm sorry if a goat a bit carried away,' he said as I dropped him at the entrance. 'No, that's okay,' I said, 'as it happens I don't think people should climb the rock either but I guess we all have to live and learn'.

I have met many Jeffs before. Not so long ago I guess I was a bit of a Jeff myself: someone who found the power of some places overwhelming. Caught up in this euphoria, the wildness of the surroundings appeared to offer all I needed. Other responsibilities were suspended. Just by being there you felt as though you owned the freedom.

In the grip of such fervour it's easy to make a fetish out of the wild. In worshipping these places an idealised version of nature takes hold of you, a world which mirrors the sentiments of Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote of the woods of his native New England: 'Here is sanctity which shames our religions, and reality which discredits our heroes'.

It's just a blink from this sort of thing to imagine that you are one of the privileged keepers of the flame and that the rest of humanity is a mere contaminant. And just because you wear the good gear and know how to bury your shit, you have the right to decide whether you'll poke around a sacred site. Or maybe mess with Mallory's long-dead body on Mt Everest. Or even hunt down the home of the Wollemi pine, just for the hell of it.

For me, bushwalking is mostly about freedom, the sheer, heart-thumping gusto of it all. And I like the fact that along the way all sorts of questions and memories rattle loose. These days, however, I'm less comfortable with freedom as an absolute right. For me, it feels even better when braced by an attempt at understanding—freedom as a means, not an end. Out of this learning comes a respect for places I should leave well enough alone, be it for the good of the place itself, or out of regard for the beliefs and freedoms of others.

There are many areas we should care of and feel passionate about. But in the end they are just places. They give shape to questions but don't supply many answers about how to live a better life in the company of our own kind. Interestingly, for the Anangu, formations like Uluru and Kata Tjuta are not natural wonders but colossal message boards in stories that traverse much larger journeys in time and space—stories that invigorate tradition and direct daily life. They

are stories worth sharing but they are not my stories.

St Marys Peak is the most popular climb in the Flinders Ranges. A great prow of quartzite, it rises from the eastern arc of Wilpena Pound. A year or so after visiting Uluru I travelled to the Flinders to climb St Marys for an article I had been asked to write. My friend Chris joined me for the trip. Neither of us had bothered to go to the top before, partly because of the crowds that gravitate to Wilpena and partly out of smugness: we thought we knew better.

Driving into Wilpena's camping ground we braced ourselves for disappointment. But to our surprise the place seemed serene and organised. 'Things have changed,' I said. 'Yeah, you live and learn,' said Chris. Once on the track any remaining misgivings vanished. It was a shining spring morning and the light spilling through the callitris pines warmed us to our task.

At Tanderra Saddle we gladly dropped our packs and jostled up the steep terraces to the top. The summit vista of ranges dipping and cresting to every horizon just blew us away. So much for our wilderness snobbery. Over lunch Chris and I bartered a few stories from trips past—a roll-call of the characters and places that belonged to our experience of the country, from north to south as far as the eye could see and then some.

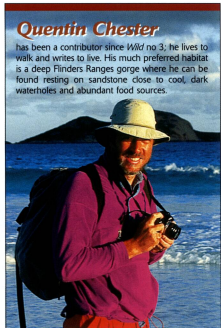
Our reminiscing was cut short by the sight of two wedge-tailed eagles sweeping towards the summit, riding the updrafts from deep in the valley below. They soared past us, seemingly close enough to touch. We watched, dumbfounded, our minds on hold as they suddenly began to dive and swoop on each other, locking talons in a mad, hurtling display. After finally separating they wheeled upwards again only to launch into another tumbling tussle, legs tangling and huge wings pitching wildly on the wind.

Charged by this show, Chris and I cantered down the scree into the Pound. That night we camped at Cooina and after a morning darting about Edeowie Gorge we made our way back to Wilpena. Legs flying and minds in free association, we crossed the grassy flats as family groups of roos and emus watched unperturbed.

One final surprise waited at Wilpena. In the visitor centre Chris checked us out of the park while I picked up an info sheet describing the Adnyamathanha creation story about the Pound. This was news to us and in that moment it felt as though the ground was shifting under our feet. The sheet also quoted an Adnyamathanha woman, Pauline Coulthard. Once again I was living and learning:

'As we were growing up we weren't allowed to climb St Marys (Ngarril Mudlanha) because of the spiritual significance and the mere fact that we might get lost. Ngarril Mudlanha means the mind waits—the mind pauses and you can't think straight. Adnyamathanha people won't climb St Marys because of its significance.'

Quentin Chester



Quentin Chester

has been a contributor since *Wild* no 3; he lives to walk and writes to live. His much preferred habitat is a deep Flinders Ranges gorge where he can be found resting on sandstone close to cool, dark waterholes and abundant food sources.

by the track as if making notes. I was only a few metres away when a bearded face turned to me in panic.

'Ah shit, no', he spluttered. 'Sorry—didn't mean to startle you', I said. 'I thought you were a ranger or something.' 'No, nothing like that—anyway, I'll leave you to it.'

'Wait, please—have you got a car? I mean, could you give us a lift?'

And so, for the second time that day I found myself implicated in someone else's outback holiday. It emerged that my accidental companion was Jeff, a 20-something student from Sydney, who was spending a week in the park with friends. They're not really into it', he said, 'so I decided to piss off on my own for a while—I mean, this place is bloody amazing'.

Over the next two hours we shared the track, walking in moonlight to complete the long loop back to Mutitjulu. Along the way he told his version of some of the Tjukurpa stories about the rock. He spoke with the zeal of a new convert and didn't hide his hostility towards what he called the 'tour-oids'. By the time we reached the car park at the foot of the climb he was in full flight,

Cruising the Cobberas

Off the track on the border of Victoria and New South Wales, by *Lucy Monie*

IT WAS 2 AM WHEN WE ARRIVED FROM Melbourne. The others must have arrived some time before as there was no sound other than the quiet ticking of the car as it cooled. I noted with relief that Andrew's tent was pitched with the others—we had arranged to meet him at Native Dog Flat at the end of his eight-day solo walk from the Bogong High Plains.

The next morning was bright and surprisingly clear. On the advice of the ranger, who arrived as we were examining the map, we decided to reverse the route we had chosen. Instead of walking along Limestone Creek on the first day, we would head for a saddle between Moscow Peak and the Cobberas No 2 as we hoped to take advantage of the clear skies for some fine views.

Looking around the group, I noted with concern that we appeared to be dominated by engineers. Besides Andrew Hook, a chemical engineer, there was Barnaby Hume, a mechanical engineer, Kate McKeand, an environmental engineer and Rob Mueller, a software engineer. Roland Crocker and Marnie Shaw, both physics PhD students, weren't offering me much in the way of solidarity either. Only Marcus Godinho, whom I hadn't met before, was similarly unscientific. It turned out that Andrew had seen no one during his solo walk and his tendency to chattiness had no outlet for eight days. Thus the soundtrack for the trip was the steady drone of Andrew's voice as he spoke with very few pauses for breath to anyone who would listen.

We cruised up the Cowombat Flat Track, reaching Bulley Creek in a very short time. Soon afterwards we left the track to climb a spur on to Moscow Peak. As we climbed, the trees became shorter and more widely spaced. Eventually we stumbled on to a pad—probably a brumby track—heading for the peak. After a succession of short scrambles on lichen-spotted outcrops interspersed with small plateaux we clambered to the summit for panoramic views. We could see the Snowy Mountains to the north and the Bogong High Plains to the west, a hazy, purple expanse, which silenced even Andrew for a few moments. Although it was sunny we had soon piled on most of our clothes and begun to shiver. Reluctantly, we turned our faces from the view and considered the descent to a saddle below.



After negotiating a loose and rocky slope, we reached the first of a series of tiered, grassy plateaux in the saddle between Moscow Peak and the Cobberas No 1. The saddle had views of Cleft Peak and Middle Peak; No 1 was partially obscured by a tree-covered slope at its foot. We pitched our tents amid large heaps of horse dung—a reminder that the closely cropped grass on the plateau was not part of nature's plan—and began to cook. At sunset there was a race with cameras for the spur of the Cobberas No 1, where we stood until it was dark.

When I woke the next morning I heard a soft snort and some sniffing around the tent. Curious, I unzipped the fly as quietly as possible and found myself eyeballing a

horse, which moved away quickly. Several brumbies and some foals were exploring the camp-site; in the mist and early morning light, they had an eerie beauty. By the time we emerged from the tents, the horses had vanished into the trees.

Our first object that morning was the Cobberas No 2. We sidled Moscow Peak and climbed to the saddle between the peaks, which is a maze of rock scrambles. We explored the saddle, poking about under large boulders before we reached the peak itself. The Snowy Mountains, hazy the previous afternoon, were etched against the skyline in the distance. The mist had burned off in the early morning sun and the white-capped peaks glinted tantalisingly.

The day became increasingly warm. We descended into a tangle of knee-high scrub and began to pick our way round a knoll below the peak, fighting with the scrub, tripping over fallen trees and itching as we sweated salt into our scratches. We stopped a couple of times to check the map and to reconsider the likelihood of reaching the Pilot that day. After some discussion we abandoned the plan. Marcus, intent on reaching the peak, set off alone for the Cowombat Flat Track and from there to the foot of the Pilot. We agreed to meet him

'...I unzipped the fly as quietly as possible and found myself eyeballing a horse, which moved away quickly.'

that evening at a site near the head of the Murray River. One member fewer, we pushed on. Eventually we reached the foot of a rocky peak at the end of the ridge, which we decided to climb in expectation of some views and a refreshing breeze.

The experience was more like rockclimbing with walking boots and a large pack than I had bargained for. An exposed climb and a step over a gaping void unnerved me but reaching the top was worth the white knuckles. The ground dropped away sharply from the peak, which lent an element of drama to the views. However, we hurried downwards, beginning to worry about reaching our appointed meeting place before dark. Our aim was to descend a spur east of Mountain Trout Creek to Cowombat Flat and from there we would walk up the Cowombat Flat Fire Track for a kilometre or two before turning east for several hundred metres to reach the agreed meeting

The Cobberas No 1 gives superb views north, over the Cobberas No 2 and the other Cobberas peaks, to the twin-summited Pilot and, on the far horizon, the Snowy Mountains. Chris Baxter

point. (The names of the tracks heading south-west and north-east from Cowombat Flat are confusing: the track that heads south-west is called the Cowombat Flat Track whereas the track going north-east is called the Cowombat Flat Fire Track on the *Suggan Buggan* map.) We later realised that we must have taken the spur east of the one we wanted. We plunged down the slope, enjoying the shorter grass and thinner scrub. Eventually we broke out into a vast, flat, grassy area. After a short break lazing beside some pools, we pressed on. Further down, the trees were taller and we walked in the shade on a clear foot-pad amid clouds of small, purple flowers.

The further we descended, the less we could see and the more uncertain we became of our exact position. We decided to take a bearing north-east, being fairly certain that if we followed the bearing we would hit the McFarlane Flat Track. We thrashed our way into a creek and out again, pausing to fill our water-bottles. We climbed steeply for a few hundred metres and then less steeply. To our relief we soon reached what we believed to be the McFarlane Flat Track.

Having arrived at the vehicle track we felt some reluctance to leave it again. We estimated that we were two kilometres south-east of Cowombat Flat and that it would be a further two kilometres east and then north on the Cowombat Flat Fire Track before we would turn off to our meeting place. It was about 5 pm and it would be pitch dark in an hour. Our other option was to cross the vehicle track and walk about one-and-a-half kilometres to Forest Hill, then another kilometre or so along the crest of the hill before dropping to the river head. It took only a moment to decide: we crossed

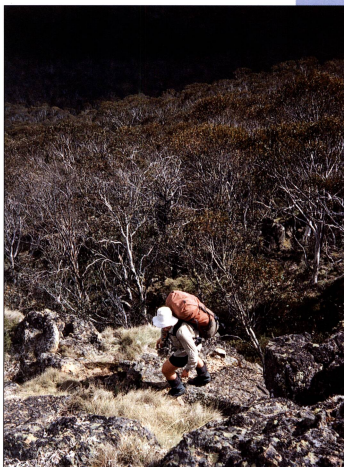
the vehicle track and entered a dense band of saplings, pushing our way to the other side of the thicket. There we followed Rob on a foot-pad through larger trees. After a few turns on the twisting foot-pad, we emerged on a wide, grassy track sloping gently upwards between huge, old eucalypts. The late afternoon sun was shining and a cool breeze was blowing; our pace quickened and we reached the top of the hill with very

east through subalpine forest, which thinned steadily. Eventually we spread out, our different levels of fitness determining how often we would stop to 'take a look at the view', quietly gasping for breath. Soon we were climbing through shorter, scrubby bushes and warped snow gums. Even the tiny flowers looked shorter. A little higher and the track traversed sections of increasingly craggy, lichen-flecked rock. We

hauled ourselves on to the summit, breathing heavily. The lowering clouds that had made our climb oppressively warm were close and tinged with deep grey. We sheltered from the wind behind the summit cairn, reading amusing excerpts from the logbook and taking photos of the view to the north.

The descent was a romp down the steep slope. We took a south-westerly bearing, knowing that we would meet the track in any case, and found ourselves in a lush gully full of deep, squelching moss and exotic-looking, succulent plants. Not wishing to disturb the local water-supply, we crossed the gully into drier forest and some time later reached the vehicle track. We returned to our packs in time for a very late lunch and stumbled, exhausted, to the camp-site at Cowombat Flat.

Cowombat Flat has a distinctly pastoral feel about it. It looks more like a peaceful, rural setting than an alpine plain. The headwaters of the mighty Murray River burble through, a swiftly moving stream, and you can leap from NSW to Victoria and back again without getting



Andrew Hook toiling up Moscow Peak. Lucy Monie

little effort. We turned north along the crest of the hill, starting a group of brumbies grazing in a small clearing. They took flight and we stopped to watch the graceful departure of these destructive creatures as they quickly put a lot of space between us and themselves. Finally, they pulled up and watched until we began to walk again. A flicker between the trees and they were gone.

We walked along the crest of the hill to the border cairn, where we performed a ceremony of sorts to celebrate the crossing into New South Wales. Then we hoofed it through the gathering dusk to meet Marcus at the head of the Murray.

Marcus had had an arduous walk to the vehicle track and hadn't made it to the Pilot either, so on day three we decided to make a dash for it. We cut back to the vehicle track where we left our packs, then walked about six kilometres north on the Cowombat Flat Fire Track to the foot of the Pilot.

Without packs, the climb was less of a puff-fest than I had expected. We headed



Lucy Monie

is the Editor of *Wild*. Her happiest moments are above the tree line and her favourite walk is usually the last one she has done.

your feet wet. On the Victorian side is the wreck of an aeroplane that crashed here in the 1950s.

Our peace was rudely shattered by the sound of an engine starting up—a group was camped under the willows near the Murray with an old four-wheel-drive vehicle. They were conducting a population study of the brumbies in the area for the Australian National University and had been given the

nod by the relevant National Park authorities to bring the vehicle in on the management tracks.

Our final day of walking was an uninspiring plod on the Cowombat Flat Track back to our cars. After poking about the wrecked aeroplane we departed, anticipating the long drive back to Melbourne that would follow. The brumby-surveying team drove past us, waving cheerily from

their four-wheel drive, and our plodding seemed slower than ever. Gradually we worked up a good momentum and began to enjoy the freedom of being able to walk four abreast and converse without the restrictions of single-file walking. We reached the cars by 1 pm, footsore and tired but extremely satisfied to have completed a circuit of this less visited part of the Australian Alps. 🇦🇺



Above, Chris Baxter on the Pilot in bleak conditions. The Main Range of the Snowy Mountains looms over his shoulder. Brian Walters. **Below**, the Snowy Mountains from the Cobberas No 2. John Siseman



Limestone Creek to the Cobberas

Wandering the remote peaks and valleys of East Gippsland, by John Siseman

TO WALK THROUGH VICTORIA'S ALPINE country often seems to entail long climbs up dry spurs from thickly forested valleys before you gain the heights. The mountains of East Gippsland offer a pleasant change—a high plateau of open forest and cool, meandering streams flowing down open, grassy valleys which are further enhanced by the craggy peaks of the Cobberas, the last truly wild mountains in Victoria. At more than 1800 metres above sea level, these are the highest peaks in East Gippsland. Huge, stunted snow gums on the summit ridges, gnarled and twisted by the icy winds, frame views of Mt Kosciuszko and the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. To the west is Mt Bogong while to the east and south range after range of blue-hued hills continue, seemingly forever. Closer to hand the crags present a bewildering topography that invites exploration and the unusual names of the peaks—the Cobberas No 1, the Cobberas No 2, Cleft Peak and Moscow Peak—add to the air of mystery.

A little to the north of the Cobberas, not far from Cowombat Flat, is the source of the mighty Murray River. The crystal-clear stream bubbling from the slopes of Forest Hill begins

a long journey to the Southern Ocean. Thickly grassed meadows and peaceful forests of black sally along the upper Murray and its tributary, Limestone Creek, are a favoured haunt of the brumby (wild horse) and with luck some should be sighted.

When to go

The summer months are the best time to undertake this walk as for the most part it is above 1000 metres in altitude. Snow may cause problems in the winter months and the spring thaw may increase river flow to dangerous levels.

Access

The small Victorian mountain town Omeo, 120 kilometres north of Bairnsdale, is the usual jumping-off point for the Cobberas. From Omeo, drive 22 kilometres to Benambra and then take the Benambra–Black Mountain road east for a further 53 kilometres. The road crosses the Great Dividing Range before descending to the Buchan River and idyllic Native Dog Flat—the starting point for the walk.

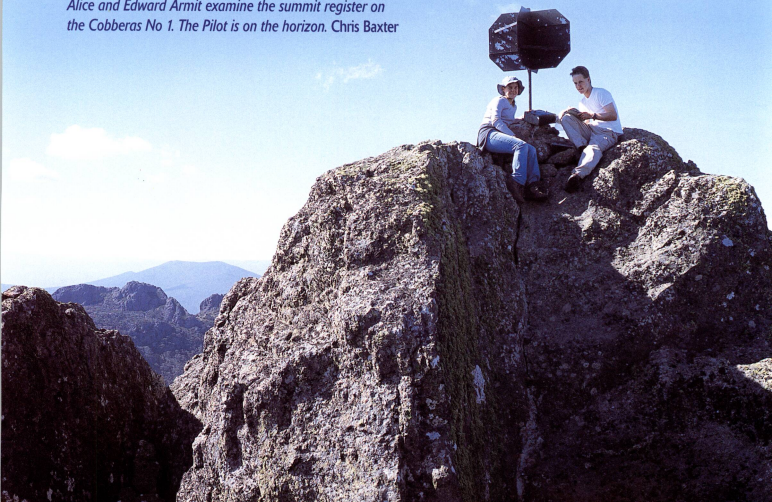
The walk

The day begins with an easy stroll across Native Dog Flat. Walk north from the bridge over the Buchan River—there is no track as you head first over grassland, then through open forest. Brumby tracks will be of some help. Do not follow Native Dog Creek, the main head of the Buchan River that flows in from the east. About two kilometres further you will reach the Cowombat Flat Track; turn right and follow the track east for 500 metres to Stony Creek, recognisable from the large clearing on the uphill side of the track. Just before you cross the creek are markers for the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) that indicate the point to leave the Cowombat Flat Track.

The walk now follows the AAWT for a few kilometres but don't expect to find a track. Walk north-west down the broad spur close to Stony Creek until the spur narrows and steepens. Veer left, descending a stony ridge into the narrow valley of Stony Creek. Continue downstream on ill-defined brumby pads above the creek.

An open, grassy hillside of limestone on the left bank is the site of an old marble

Alice and Edward Armit examine the summit register on the Cobberas No 1. The Pilot is on the horizon. Chris Baxter



Continue down Stony Creek, following the sometimes dry creek-bed before scrambling along the steep, western side of the valley. Upon meeting the Limestone Creek Track walk downstream for a kilometre to the ford across Limestone Creek. Do not cross here—find a track on the east bank and proceed until a good track begins to emerge. This leads downstream for almost four kilometres, fording Limestone Creek four times before climbing high above a waterfall, then descending to grassy flats. The track becomes less distinct and it is time to find the final crossing before Limestone Creek takes a sharp turn to the east. Blackberries

The Murray River, the boundary between Victoria and NSW, flows through the middle of the flat and the stream can be straddled with one foot in each State. On the Victorian side the Cowombat Flat Track enters from the south-west, close to the remains of an RAAF aircraft that crashed here in 1953, killing one crew member. The survivors, one seriously injured, made their way along this track to Benambra. RAAF salvage teams removed much of the aircraft by this track and souvenir hunters have reduced the rest of the wreckage to what is left today.

Not far away the NSW-Victoria border begins a straight line to Cape Howe on the coast between Eden and Mallacoota. The border was set out in 1870 by surveyors Black and Allen from the easternmost source of the Murray River at Forest Hill where the remains of a large cairn built by Black and Allen can still be seen. The easiest route to Forest Hill is to walk east along Cowombat Flat Fire Track to the point where it turns north. Leave the fire track here and continue east along a foot track descending into the headwaters of the Murray River before climbing to the ridge crest of Forest Hill. The remains of the border cairn are in a clearing on the ridge. Further investigation below the summit will uncover a small spring amid thick tea-tree scrub and marked with a steel

Day three

The shorter return follows the Cowombat Flat Track round the western slopes of the Cobberas, a long, hard walk that can be completed in one day. The more interesting two-day alternative is a traverse of the wild Cobberas Peaks and is recommended. There isn't a direct track from Cowombat Flat and the rough and scrubby spur will provide plenty of adventure. Climbing generally south over increasingly scrubby knolls and saddles to the summit of the Cobberas No 2 (1729 metres), the route is slow going. An easier but longer route follows the Cowombat Flat Track for eight kilometres to a saddle before turning east and climbing an untracked ridge to the saddle south of the Cobberas No 2. This avoids much of the scrub on the more direct route as a considerable part of the climbing is done before you leave the track.

From the saddle walk south, first sidling an unnamed knoll and then Moscow Peak to the broad, grassy saddle at the head of Moscow Creek. This is an ideal camp-site and water is available from pools in the saddle or from the headwaters of Moscow Creek itself. Moscow Peak (1685 metres) is an easy climb from the saddle.

Day four

From camp, climb steep, open slopes southeast to the summit ridge of the Cobberas

No 1. Once on the ridge make a detour to Cleft Peak (1802 metres). The reward for a dramatic scramble to its rocky summit is the most extensive view of any of the peaks in the area. Return along the ridge, climbing Middle Peak before tackling the Cobberas No 1 (1825 metres). The summit cairn is at the southern end of the ridge.

From the summit a foot track leads to the Playgrounds first west and then south-west from the northern end of the summit ridge. Lower, the track swings south and descends close to a gully to arrive at the Playgrounds, a long, narrow, grassy snow plain. Turn right down the wheel tracks and cross Native Dog Creek to meet the Cobberas Track at the end of the plain. This climbs away from the Playgrounds, passing another track on the left. A little further on, watch for a foot track on the right. It heads down the valley of Native Dog Creek, passing through open forest and crossing some small gullies before arriving at Native Dog Flat. 

Born in London, *John Siseman* has explored the high mountains of Victoria, Tasmania and NSW since arriving in Australia in the late 1950s. His knowledge has proliferated into a number of useful bushwalking guides. He has trekked in the Himalayas between bouts of employment in a Melbourne gear shop.

the walk
AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium/hard
Length	Four days
Distance	55–60 kilometres
Region	High mountains of East Gippsland, Victoria
Nearest town	Benambra
Start/finish	Native Dog Flat, on the Benambra–Black Mountain road
Map	<i>Suggan Buggan</i> 1:50 000 (LPI)
Best time	Late summer to early autumn
Special points	Sufficient water should be carried during the day

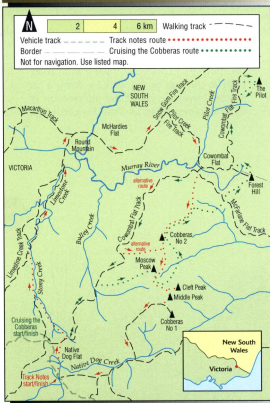
and tea-tree scrub make the crossing a little awkward.

On the west bank is an old vehicle track. Turn right and climb away from the creek, then rejoin the well-formed Limestone Creek Track as it climbs a low ridge before crossing Greenwood Creek and circling behind Round Mountain. Keep right at the junction with McCarthy's Track and descend to the Murray River. Ford the river with care to McHardies Flat—an excellent, secluded camp-site. A grove of poplars indicates the site of a former habitation.

Day two

Having crossed the Murray River the walk now takes leave of the Alpine National Park, continuing into NSW and Kosciuszko National Park. Climb due east from the poplars. At first there is no track on the grassy spur but there is a good foot track where low scrub begins. Climb south-east to a saddle on the spur before swinging north-east.

The Cobberas



Reedy Creek Chasm

Chris Baxter explores some of Victoria's remotest country

THERE CAN'T BE MANY EXPERIENCED VICTORIAN bushwalkers who haven't at least considered a visit to the fabled Reedy Creek Chasm. Its allure is almost legendary. However, relatively few have visited this pristine part of mainland Australia's smallest State. Fewer still have traversed the length of this canyon-like slit on an otherwise unremarkable tributary of the Buchan River, itself a tributary of the once mighty Snowy River.

The walk described is a round trip that entails a traverse of the entire chasm. It is dependent on water-levels; the lower the water the easier this crucial section of the trip. At even a moderately high level it would not be possible to go back (upstream) through the most confined sections of the chasm where it would be impossible to escape the deep and fast-flowing water because of the sheer walls. In high water the chasm would be dangerous. Even in the less precipitous sections it is usually easier to walk the slippery and uneven bottom of the creek than the scrubby banks. The whole walk can be done comfortably in three days.

When to go

March and April, when temperatures are unlikely to be excessive and the water-level in Reedy Creek is at its lowest, are the favoured times. Avoid a period after heavy rain. Similarly, winter and spring are not recommended because of the risk of high water. In winter snow covers much of the surrounding region, making the roads impassable.

Safety

Apart from dangers associated with water-levels, Reedy Creek is remote and rugged.

A mishap is not difficult to imagine and could have serious consequences—a rescue could be time-consuming and very difficult. The trip described calls for strong navigation skills. Camp-sites on Reedy Creek are small and scarce.

Further reading

Material about Reedy Creek Chasm is hard to come by. Perhaps that is part of its allure! The only accounts that have been published in *Wild* are brief: Track Notes by Brian Walters in issue no 6 describe only the first part of the walk, and the article 'Victoria's Toughest Country' in issue no 84 includes an account of a recent visit by the author.

Access

From the Omeo Highway turn east towards Bindi at Tongio, eight kilometres north of Swifts Creek. Turn right on to the Nunniong Road (look for a sign indicating the Tambo Valley Golf Course), cross the Tambo River and pass the turn-off on the left to the golf course. Using the *Omeo-Bindi* sheet, follow the road generally north-east past the enormous Nunniong Plain to the signposted Jam Tin Flat Track ('Jam Tin Road' on the map) on the right, where there is a seasonally locked gate. If the gate is locked and you have only one car, leave it here. If the gate is open it is possible to take a two-wheel drive most, if not all, the eight kilometres to the junction of the signposted Brumby Point Track turn-off on the left (GR923947). If you have two cars you'll save a long road-bash at the end of the walk by doing a car shuttle; leave one car at the intersection of the Nunniong Road and the Forlorn Hope

Track (which is permanently closed to vehicles).

The walk

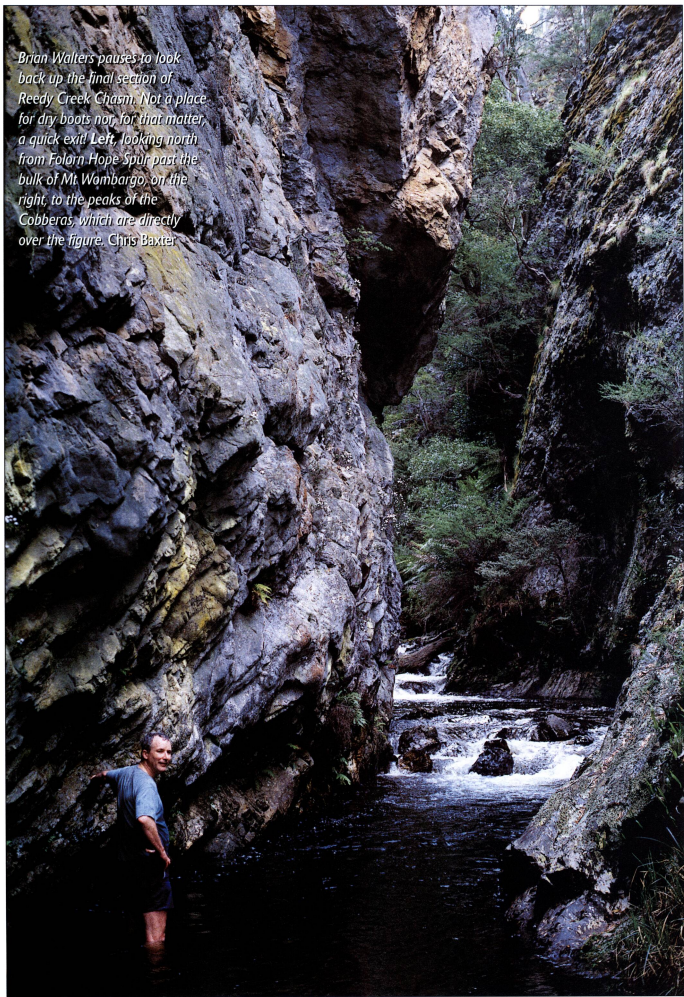
The first day is moderately long, particularly if you walk all the way from the Nunniong Road. However, the Jam Tin Flat Track is easy and offers occasional glimpses north to the substantial Reedy Creek catchment area. The only hazards are the frequent and massive piles of brumby droppings! Indeed, you have a good chance of spotting the culprits themselves on this track. Regardless of time constraints, serious peak baggers won't forgo the opportunity for an easy tick of Mt Nunniong, the major peak in the region, which is only a kilometre south of the Jam Tin Flat Track along the Blue Shirt Track.

Follow the Brumby Point Track to its end. It follows a defined ridge through snow gums, swinging east as it descends to an abrupt end at a breathtaking vantage point overlooking Reedy Creek's wild and untracked catchment area (GR958947). The chasm itself remains hidden by ridges to the north-east. Your next target is the rocky knoll just over a kilometre north-east. Keep the Reedy Creek valley in sight on the left as you bash down through fairly dense regrowth into the saddle below the knoll and up on to it (GR964987). This is a good place to pause and study the way ahead—the outlook is superb, if a little daunting. It is worth memorising details of the descent to the creek and the way out that you will take the next day.

A steep spur plunges abruptly from the knoll just west of north down towards Reedy Creek. Although relatively open, it requires some 'scree skiing' to negotiate. Your next target is the distinctive hill (GR964997)



Brian Walters pauses to look back up the final section of Reedy Creek Chasm. Not a place for dry boots nor, for that matter, a quick exit! Left, looking north from Folorn Hope Spur past the bulk of Mt Wombargo, on the right, to the peaks of the Cobberas, which are directly over the figure. Chris Baxter



near the foot of the spur. From the top of the hill turn north-east and descend very steeply to the creek, taking care to avoid the occasional small outcrop.

To arrive at the creek is a moving experience. You are at the heart of pristine wilderness and may feel that you are a long way from civilisation. Your world is reduced to the bubbling stream, rock, scrub and, far above the deep valley, the sky. Small scrub wrens dart about the tangled vegetation, and the occasional monitor or goanna lurches off its warm rock as you approach.

Looking around, you realise that campsites are at a premium. It's just as well that it's not yet time to call it a day! However, on examining the way ahead you soon come to the conclusion that there's not even enough dry land for you to walk on. Immediately downstream are outlier bluffs and cliffs heralding the chasm proper. Where there are banks the scrub makes walking impracticable. There's nothing for it but to march boldly into the creek and head downstream. This soon proves to be no high way. Reedy Creek's slippery, boulder-strewn floor demands caution—and that you keep your boots on. Trekking poles mightn't be a bad idea either. Then there are log-jams and other obstacles to clamber over and round. Even if you manage to avoid falling over you're going to get wet. Make sure that your pack is waterproof!

The way downstream is slow. You gradually realise that the failing light may not be due only to the fact that you dallied too long over lunch but also because you are being enclosed by cliffs that have become taller, more precipitous and closer together. Reedy Creek Chasm is indeed an awesome place. You will feel particularly small and insignificant, vulnerable even, as vertical or overhanging cliffs, just ten metres apart, soar above you for 100 metres or more before beginning to break down. The distant sky is visible through only a narrow slit and the

way ahead doesn't look promising. So smooth and steep are the cliffs that you couldn't get out of the rushing water even if you wanted to and there's no telling how deep it is. Fortunately, unless the creek is high you can wade through the chasm without being swept off your feet (for a short distance) as we were in early November. The chasm ends abruptly. It would still qualify as a gorge but the valley suddenly widens sufficiently for you to leave the water on the right (south) bank. After two hours in the creek this is the first opportunity to camp but space is still scarce. We managed to clear enough stones from a creek-side shingle bank to make room for two people under a tent fly. About 100 metres further on there is at least some reasonably level, scrubby bank on the south side. A party of four should be regarded as a maximum to have even a cramped camp.

Day two

Next morning it is an hour's walk downstream to the exit point from Reedy Creek. Surprisingly, it can be done on the south bank without entering the water but it entails continuous scrub-bashing interspersed with the occasional scramble over slabby bluffs. You are heading for the confluence with the east branch of Farquhar Creek (GR980999). You must pay careful attention to the navigation but this should not be difficult to find. It is the first discernible tributary to Reedy Creek from the north since you reached its banks. It isn't a cliffside trickle and enters from a relatively substantial valley. Wade across Reedy Creek to the east bank of Farquhar Creek and follow the pronounced spur just east of north on the east side of Farquhar Creek. Although initially it is fairly steep, this spur is reasonably open and allows good progress until it deposits you on Reedy Track just beyond its snow-gum-adorned crest. Follow this four-wheel-

drive track north-west until it joins the Forlorn Hope Track, also heading north-west, then west through a locked gate to Forlorn Hope Plain, a substantial snow plain on the left. In contrast to the previous night, camp-sites are plentiful (as are mosquitoes) but water may be a problem. Forlorn Hope Creek flows south from the plain but you may have to follow it for some distance to find flowing water that is unadulterated by cattle and brumbies. (It may be prudent to carry water from Reedy Creek.)

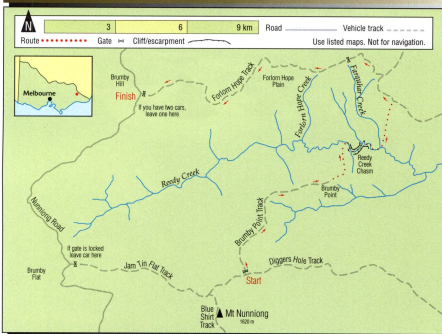
Day three

If you've been able to leave a car at the junction of the Forlorn Hope Track and the Nunning Road you have a short and easy walk to finish the trip. If you weren't able to

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium-hard
Length	Three days
Distance	About 35 kilometres
Height gain	800 metres
Type	Remote and rugged gorge
Region	East Gippsland, Victoria
Nearest town	Swifts Creek
Start/finish	On the Nunning Road; start at the Jam Tin Flat Track, finish at the Forlorn Hope Track
Maps	Ormeo-Bindi and Deception-Dedick 1:50 000
Best time	Late summer-early autumn
Special points	Includes some tough creek walking through sections of inescapable chasm, party size should not exceed four

Reedy Creek Chasm



do this you have also to factor in a road-bash back to the Jam Tin Flat Track or to the Brumby Point Track.

Between Forlorn Hope Plain and the Nunning Road the Forlorn Hope Track follows Forlorn Hope Spur and is one of the more attractive vehicle tracks in East Gippsland. Closed to all but management vehicles, it keeps mainly to the crest of the high ridge that occasionally rises to over 1500 metres. It is open, snow-gum country with charming snow plains. There are excellent views to the south where you've spent the last couple of days and the proud bulk of Mt Nunning dominates the background. The views to the north will have you planning your next trip, to the mighty Cobberas and beyond. ☺

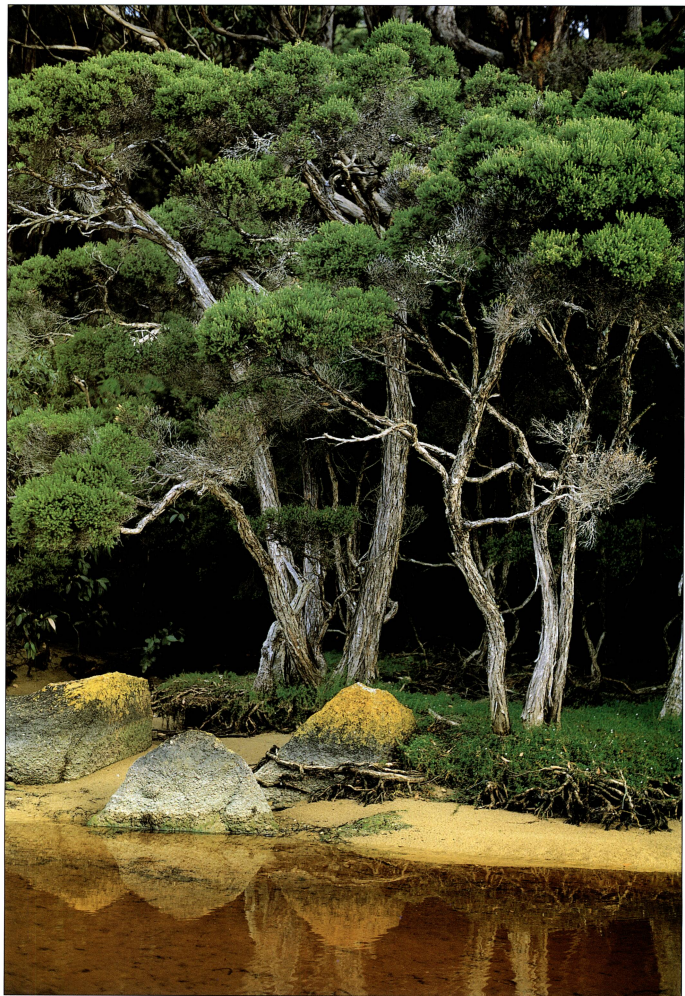
Chris Baxter has been grappling with scrub since his pre-teen days. Much of this rather dubious activity has taken place in East Gippsland. To this day that rugged region retains a special place in his heart. His 'day job' is publishing *Wk*.

The Prom

Victoria's best-loved wild place, by *Michele Kohout*



Shadows and light, Cotters Dunes. All photos were taken at Wilsons Promontory.





Above, Sealers Cove. Left, Sealers Creek.

A biologist and illustrator, Michele Kohout finds the outdoors a constant lure. Armed with a tent and a camera, her favourite destination is Sealers Cove at Wilsons Promontory.



Before the Great Flood

The last days of Burrarorang,
by Andrew Vilder

A TRIO OF YOUNG BUSHWALKERS LEFT the train at Hill Top late on a misty Friday night. While the few local residents scurried to their warm homes, the walkers set a crackling pace along Starlights Trail towards the Nattai River. They reached a lonely farm, erected tents in a paddock and slept.

In the morning they followed the Nattai to its junction with the Wollondilly, where it was very wide with a sandy bottom. Having waded across, they loped along fenceless paddocks, re-crossing the Nattai at Bimlow Bridge. The broad valley they had traversed during the day began to narrow into a canyon.

Exhausted, they reached the Coxs River at 5.30 pm and dug up a food cache; they lit a huge fire and fell asleep. Waking seven hours later in a thick fog, they set out again on a track between casuarinas and smooth boulders. Encouraged by conversations with several other parties from Splendour Rock in the Wild Dog Range, the group reached a second cache of food at Jenolan River in time for a late lunch.

***'...rangers policed
their territory using
four-wheel drives,
"blitzes" (army
trucks), horses and
dogs; it took cunning
and luck on the part
of the bushwalker to
evade them.'***

It was dark by the time they reached Megalong Valley and stumbled on to the Six Foot Track. Ascending by Devils Hole, the walkers plodded through suburban streets to Katoomba, aiming for the evening train back to Sydney. Arriving at the station at 7.50 pm, Mick Ellick, Johnny Manning and Freddie Worrell were jubilant that they had achieved their objective of walking 100 miles (161 kilometres) in 48 hours.

It was a trip they would never do again.

A reader familiar with the areas described will notice something odd about the route taken: most of it no longer exists. The valley they passed through was the legendary Burrarorang, which for the last 40 years has been submerged by the deep, silent waters of Warragamba Dam.



Central Burrarorang. The cemetery is on the far bank of the river. All areas pictured in this article are now under water. All photos Colin Watson collection, late 1950s

The walk outlined above took place in April 1958 and was the last recorded trip through this area for the Sydney Bush Walkers (SBW). By then, passage was becoming hazardous; it entailed lengthy detours or long swims and escapades from the ever watchful Metropolitan Water, Sewerage & Drainage Board (MWSDB) personnel. A few others may have managed to squeeze through in the remaining months before the swiftly rising waters sealed off the 'front door' to the Kowmung and Kanangra. By 1961 the Burrarorang valley was effectively submerged and the 'golden age' of southern Blue Mountains bushwalking had ended.

'The Burrarorang was magnificent', recalls Colin Watson, a prominent Coast and Mountain Walkers member and a frequent visitor to the valley. 'I've seen nothing comparable

to it in decades of walking in Australia, except perhaps the Widdien valley in the Wollemi (NSW). The rocks and cliffs in Widdien are very similar but it is a much drier valley. The Burrarorang rivers in flood were a sight to behold.'

It was the copious amounts of water flowing through Burrarorang that made it an attractive water-supply for Sydney as early as 1845 when explorer Strzelecki suggested that some sort of reservoir might be built there. The idea was tossed about for another 93 years before a 15 metre high concrete weir was constructed in 1938 to alleviate a record drought; water was pumped to Sydney by a large, above-ground pipe. It didn't make any difference to the upstream farms and townships of Bimlow and Burrarorang.



Plans for a much larger dam (161 metres high) which would flood the entire valley were announced in 1941 and the residents of Burragorang formed a defence league. Watson remembers that some conservationists at the time were unhappy about the damming but it was generally agreed that the project had to proceed quickly to provide enough water for the swelling population of Sydney. Alternative dams on the Grose or Colo Rivers had already been rejected because of environmental or technical problems.

Construction began in 1948 and the Water Board offered a reasonable resettlement deal for the inhabitants of Burragorang during the ten years before it was submerged. Five hundred men were employed to remove all vegetation, as dead trees would affect the water quality. Much of it was burned in heaps, filling the valley with smoke for months. Rampant weeds soon infested the denuded area.

Dam-related personnel were stationed throughout the valley and made life difficult

for bushwalkers who sought to continue their walks across Water Board land until the last days. Walkers who had enjoyed very amicable relationships with the valley's landowners could not understand why they should now be denied access—and were determined to be stopped only by the rising water.

MWSDB rangers policed their territory using four-wheel drives, 'blitzes' (army trucks), horses and dogs; it took cunning and luck on the part of the bushwalker to evade them. Camping was prohibited within two miles (3.2 kilometres) of stored potable water and on the whole members of walking clubs respected this rule. However, it seems anybody carrying a rucksack, swag or billycan was suspect and liable to interrogation, even when merely passing through!



Probably the first white walker in Burragorang was the surveyor Francis Barrallier who passed through in 1802 *en route* to the upper Tonalli River. Like many of his contemporaries, Barrallier sought a way through the Great Dividing Range from Sydney. In this he was unsuccessful although he is credited with mapping the Kowmung River and Christys Creek. In the remote and savage chasms of Christys Creek Barrallier was forced to admit defeat and retraced his steps to Picton.

Close on Barrallier's heels was George Caley in 1806. Caley named several of the major rivers mapped by Barrallier: the Nepean, the Hawkesbury (now the Wollondilly) and the Dryander (now the Kowmung), and deduced that the three are interconnected.

Settlement of the valley began in the 1820s, notably by cattlemen. Many were ex-convicts who were issued land grants by the colonial government to encourage the development of outlying areas. These hardy settlers used the upper river canyons as winter pastures for their stock and built small huts as outstations, some of which were still standing 100 years



The 'tigers' would usually traverse the length of the Nattai valley in half a day.



Colin Watson's trusty Austin A40 Campmobile was often used to convey walkers into Burrigorang. Here a group poses on a bridge as they return from a walk to Colong Caves in 1955.

later and provided occasional shelter for bushwalkers.

During its 160-year long white history, the valley was the home of a variety of people: pastoralists, corn- and fruit growers, bush-rangers, timber cutters, miners, guest-house keepers, wanderers and opportunists. Some stayed for generations, others only for a few days. They shared a reputation for resilience in the face of isolation and they tackled bushfires, floods and shortages.

Pioneer bushwalkers Myles Dunphy and Herb Gallop completed the first recorded Katoomba-to-Picton cross-country walk during 20 days in October 1914. They headed south into completely unknown wilderness from Jenolan Caves and descended by the Hollanders and Tuglow River canyons to find the source of the Kowmung, which they hoped to follow to its distant junction with the Coss. Among their gear was Australia's first ever lightweight expedition tent—handmade from waterproof japara cloth for Dunphy; by his own account it performed superbly.

This was to become one of the great epic endurance walks; the pair battled through weeks of torrential rain, shot rabbits and pigeons for food and were often forced to leave the river due to fearsome terrain. At one point Gallop nearly drowned. They did not reach the Coss, deciding instead to leave much earlier by Lannigans Creek to Yerranderie and trudge the cart track to Picton. It was a tremendous achievement and showed that immense distance could be covered with little equipment and food—a model adopted by marathon bushwalkers. Paddy Pallin soon

began to sell japara tents and canvas rucksacks, enabling others to acquire this vital equipment.

By the 1930s small groups of serious bushwalkers were 'earning their stripes' on regular weekend jaunts from Katoomba to Picton. The route traversed the Burrigorang valley and became a benchmark SBW 'tiger' trip. After an ordinary Friday at work these men and women caught the evening train to the Blue Mountains, then walked as far as possible into the night before they were overcome by exhaustion. Many had close friendships with residents and they were likely to receive a hearty hot meal and a dry place to sleep—usually on both nights! Covering some 65 kilometres during each 24-hour period, it was probably needed.

On a well-documented walk in summer 1938, David Stead reported that some tiger walkers caught a black snake at the Coss, which they carried alive in a billy-can as a mascot for the rest of the day. Don't try this at home! They also found time for frequent swims, attended a party at Moody's Guesthouse on the Saturday night—and still reached Picton by 7.39 pm on Sunday. They carried a written schedule of 35 points along the route, noting alongside each one the time it was reached and the cumulative distance as a record of their efforts.

Wentworth Falls by way of Kings Tableland was a frequently used easier northern approach to the valley; it allowed a Saturday departure from Sydney. Others chose to enter the valley from Picton or Camden and head west by Yerranderie to explore the Colong area before reaching Katoomba by

way of the Black Range. A bus service was established between Sydney and Yerranderie but it tended to be unreliable, so you had to be prepared to hitch a ride or walk out.

By the time the dam was mooted, Burrigorang was more of a thoroughfare than a destination (although many bushwalkers still stayed in one of the guest-houses or camped on a farm).

The next generation of tiger walkers revived the Katoomba-to-Picton trip during the mid-1950s, preferring to traverse from south to north. Although it was no longer possible to stay overnight in Burrigorang, it was imperative that the first full day be set aside for a complete crossing of the valley. It was easily extended to 100 miles by starting at Hill Top (reached by train on the Picton Loop line) as was the case for the April 1958 walk. The fitter (or certifiable!) participant would begin at Mittagong, making for a total of 110 miles to Katoomba.

According to one of the instigators, Geoff 'Jet' Wagg, marathon trips became an obsession with some members of SBW but were frowned upon by others, so on the official programme they were called 'long walks' to appease the conservatives.

'Our walks were always substantiated by signing every visitor's book along the way, recording the exact time of arrival and departure and who else was there', says Wilf Hilder (then the President of SBW), 'unlike some feats one hears about today, which are

based on the participants' own purely verbal account.

The 1950s walkers faced new problems of rising water and exposure, and could no longer rely on the comfort of farmhouses on cold and rainy nights. Honorary SBW member Norbert Carlton died in early 1958, aged 75, ending a 35-year tradition of stopovers for bushwalkers at his cheerful hearth. The essential cattleman, Carlton was born and raised in Burrigorang.

By this time most of the trees in the valley had been felled, which presented a scene of awful desolation', according to Wagg. However, there was sometimes an unexpected

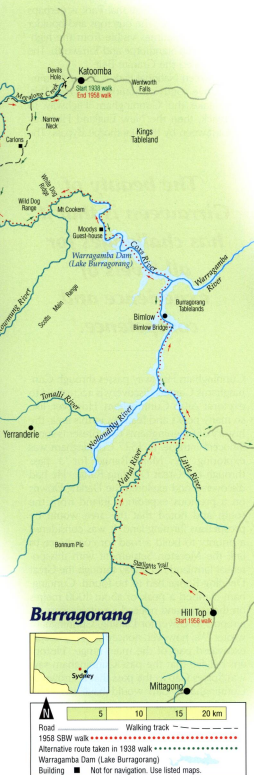
bonus when we came upon an orchard at an abandoned property. At one place we ate so many ripe plums that we could barely move afterwards. Other walkers reported finding wild orange trees that had reached heights of forty feet (about 12 metres), on which the fruit had become sour. It was eaten anyway.

Wagg describes the basic food carried on long walks in the 1950s: dehydrated vegetables and fruit from Paddy Pallin, eggs, salami, bacon, cracker biscuits and powdered milk. Breakfast was usually oatmeal porridge, and some people heated stew from home in a billy for dinner. It sounds little different from what we'd take today.

see the valley go...walking through it was a real pleasure.'

It is still possible to walk overland between Katoomba and Mittagong in 48 hours, and in winter 1963 a group including Hilder and Ray Jerrens departed from Katoomba Station at 8.30 pm on Friday but they did not travel through the Burrigorang valley. It was a race and the five soon parted company. Their route took them by Narrow Neck and White Dog Ridge to the Cox's, where they climbed Mt Cookem to camp on its stony summit at 1 am.

On Saturday they followed Scotts Main Range into deserted Yerranderie, then through Byrnes Gap and along the Sheepwalk to the



The view from the rocky crown of Mt Burrigorang down the Nattai valley to Burrigorang.

In 1966 Watson followed the route of his earlier bushwalks in a motor launch. As a member of the National Parks Association State Council, he was one of about 20 executives on an official inspection cruise of the upper reaches of Warrigamba Dam. 'It was a sad day for me', Watson recalls.

Although the flooding of Burrigorang extinguished a beautiful valley, from a wider perspective it preserved the wilderness to the west which had already been subject to extensive cedar cutting and silver-mining. The residents of Sydney continue to enjoy a good water-supply, thoroughly filtered by the shallow, sandy rivers and creeks that feed the dam. Families frolic among the shoreline picnic areas with little thought of the forgotten world below and the people who passed along its many ways.

Wagg no doubt expressed the thoughts of many bushwalkers: 'We were very sorry to

Wollondilly where, after crossing, Hilder camped alone near Bonnum Pic. It was a huge and exhausting day for them all—one competitor was 'rescued' by a Water Board Ranger and taken by boat to Warrigamba. On Sunday Hilder reached the Wombeyan road at Bullio and slogged east into Mittagong, covering a mere 40 kilometres before he was signed off by the station signalman in time for a late lunch.

'You wouldn't want to do a walk like that too often', Hilder thoughtfully sums up the 120-mile trip.

Say no more. 🐾

Andrew Vilder

lives in Sydney with his wife Monika and two young sons. He enjoys wilderness in many ways, from caving, canyoning, bicycle touring and, more recently, marathon bushwalking. He is an architect, artist and writer and a member of the Sydney Bush Walkers.



QUEENSLAND BUSHWALKING

Girraween

A pilgrimage to the pyramids of south-east Queensland, by Dave Moss

THE ANCIENT GRANITE MASS THAT IS THE New England Tableland has a great variety of National Parks; some are highly developed, others are still alluring wilderness. The tableland stretches from Stanthorpe, the wine cellar of south-east Queensland, to Armidale in the south-west with its great gorges and wild rivers. The beautiful town of Dorrigo is perched high on the edge of the south-eastern escarpment. The eastern escarpment runs north, encompassing the Gibraltar Range, Washpool and Boonoo Boonoo National Parks near the Queensland-New South Wales border. Particularly spectacular geological features of the tableland are the areas where the underlying granite is exposed. Girraween National Park is perhaps the best example. The outcrops and boulder fields are sometimes visible from the highway between Stanthorpe and Tamworth. The area is called the Granite Belt.

Girraween National Park is about 40 minutes' drive south of Stanthorpe. From Brisbane take the Cunningham Highway to Warwick, then the New England Highway to Girraween by the Stanthorpe Bypass. The

***'The beauty of
Girraween is that it
has challenges for
all levels of
experience and
competence.'***

Cunningham Highway passes through Cunninghams Gap; its discovery is accredited to explorer Allan Cunningham. However, like so many peaks and features in this area, the history of Cunninghams Gap presents some innocent intrigue. In 1827 Cunningham was exploring the Main Range for a pass through the Great Dividing Range. He had discovered and explored the Darling Downs on a previous expedition inland from the south and noted that the area would be prosperous farming land. It was considered a priority to build a road for commerce to link the Moreton Settlement with this potential farmland but a way through the Great Dividing Range had to be found. Cunningham climbed a peak of about 1000 metres on the range and noticed a suitable pass. In a report to Governor Darling, Cunningham wrote: 'We, however, noticed...a very deeply excavated part of the main range.' Historians believe that the pass Cunningham saw was Spices Gap as the pass that is known as Cunninghams Gap would have been obscured by the peak to its south—Mt Mitchell.

The scramble up Billy Goat Hill.
All photos Gary Tischer



The original road to the Darling Downs was built through Spices Gap. A section of this historical road has been preserved and can be explored on foot from the Spices Gap parking area. The turn-off is just outside the Aratula township.

Upon reaching Girraween National Park we set up our base camp at the camping grounds, which are very well serviced. We

near the top that leads to the left-hand shoulder of the Pyramid. Great views of the surrounding park can be enjoyed from the summit. There are rock-pile caves to explore and Balancing Rock to ponder—I suspect everyone hopes not to be around when it becomes Tumbling Rock!

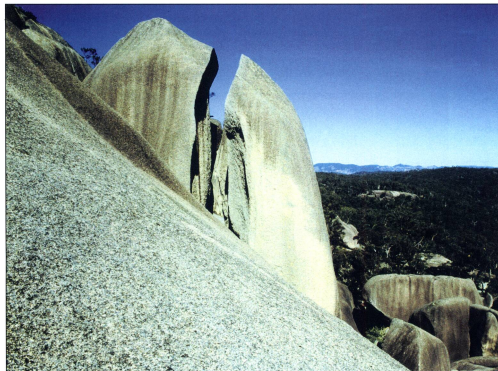
The Second Pyramid is tantalisingly close but to climb it is not an easy matter. We

nique is to run at it as fast as you can and try to make the top. Few are aware that the keys to success are friction and a climbing technique called 'bridging'. We walked around the Second Pyramid until we reached the gully that leads to a chimney. To climb a chimney you put your back against one wall and your feet against the other. It is a very solid technique and a lot of fun when

you get used to it. In fact, the chimney technique can be used all over the park to explore chasms and cracks between boulders. Here, again I used a rope to bring the team safely to the base of the next obstacle. A squeeze-chimney was the only remaining obstacle to the summit. On the summit we waved to people on the First Pyramid and noted that Slip Rock Peak behind us to the north would be a challenge for another trip.

When we returned to camp the shower gave me a stinging reminder to wear long pants for tomorrow's scramble. It is advisable to be covered if you intend to explore the granite outcrops. Friends arrived to join us for dinner and for our walk the next day. We were aiming for Turtle Rock, about six kilometres away. This walk takes in Castle Rock, a two kilometre detour, the Sphinx and finally Turtle Rock at the end of the track.

We awoke to a crisp and cool morning under a clear blue sky,



Above, split rock at South Bald Rock. Right, the waterfall camp-site.

did not plan to do any through walks, just day-trips to each of the monoliths. Girraween means place of flowers and more than 700 plant species have been recorded in the area. Some only exist here and many are rare or threatened. Due to the elevation of the tableland, about 900 metres above sea level, this granite habitat is unique in Queensland. The Granite Belt is the only area in Queensland where common wombats are found and the rare spot-tailed quoll is sometimes seen.

We visited the area to climb and scramble to the top of as many outcrops as possible. The beauty of Girraween is that it has challenges for all levels of experience and competence. On the first day we wanted to climb the First and Second Pyramids. A graded track leads to the base of the First Pyramid. The many steps require you to walk at a pace that is suitable for your fitness level. However, once on the apron of the Pyramid, the steep, blank rock ahead requires a little more than fitness. It is great to see people digging deep to overcome their fears on this relatively safe scramble. The rough granite surface provides excellent friction and as you scramble onwards the height gain can be a little surprising. The most exposed section of the climb is a slab



traversed behind Balancing Rock across a steep slab and into a tree-lined break that leads down towards the saddle between the two Pyramids. For security the children wore climbing harnesses and I top-roped them down the final chute to the saddle. From here you pass Running Rock, a naturally occurring, eight metre high, granite slippery-slide on a giant boulder. The popular tech-

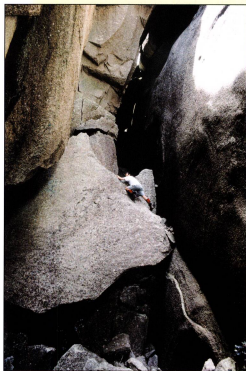
had a quick breakfast and got on our way. Castle Rock has an interesting chasm that leads to an airy slab, then on to the summit. From the summit you feel as though you are in the centre of the park. To the north-west we could see the two Pyramids, to the south the Sphinx and Turtle Rock and to the south-east, Mt Norman, the highest outcrop in the park.

A Walk in the Park

Beyond Bald Rock, by Gary Tischer

THERE AREN'T TOO MANY PLACES IN THE Sunshine State where it has snowed since the last ice age. Girraween, however, is one of those exceptional places.

Late one Friday night in the middle of winter six of us arrived in the very cold and dark Bald Rock National Park. The next day we were to start a two-day walk into Girraween National Park. Although many of the sites have unimaginative names—Bald Rock, South Bald Rock, West Bald Rock and—of course—Middle Bald Rock, they are well worth visiting.



Off the track under South Bald Rock!

Girraween National Park is on the Queensland side of the border and Bald Rock National Park adjoins it in New South Wales. The area of granite outcrops and boulder-strewn fields was formed 220 million years ago under older sandstones and volcanic formations which have long since eroded. Many huge boulders are balanced unnervingly on small bases that seem to challenge the laws of physics. Many a bushwalker has tried to upset the granite balance of nature without success.

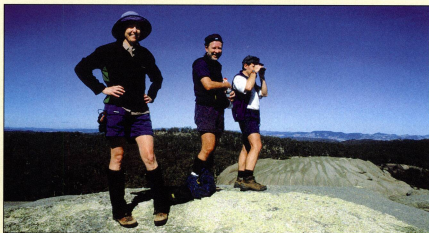
On a crisp and clear winter morning we donned packs and headed up the fire track round Bald Rock. The parks are crisscrossed with numerous fire tracks, which makes the walking relatively easy. Even off-track walking is not difficult as the terrain is mostly open woodland with some stunted and shrubby mallee among the

granite outcrops and rock pavements. The area is a complex mosaic of vegetation with parched swamps, moist gullies and boulder clusters.

As the party walked south we were able to take in expansive views to the west. The many different granite outcrops were difficult to identify as they look

the stove and candles talking about past adventures.

The frost melted as the sun struck the tents the next morning. We headed downstream towards Billy Goat Hill and made a short side-trip to a structure known as the Roundhouse. Its name is derived from its shape and because it was the home of



Enjoying the extraordinary view from the top of South Bald Rock.

similar from a distance. After about six kilometres we reached the base of South Bald Rock. It is particularly spectacular as it has a large fissure between the rock that has captured numerous boulders, some the size of houses. A large cavern was formed in the depths of the crack and torches are necessary to find a way through the haphazard jumble of rocks.

The entrance to this cave can be reached from the north or south. We chose to enter from the south where a large, phallus-shaped boulder marks the easiest way in. Before entering the cave, we climbed over the top of South Bald Rock for great views in all directions.

Among the boulders it was difficult to work through the maze-like structure. Two members of our party had visited before and were able to guide us safely through. The ability to squeeze through small rock openings is an advantage if you don't want to be trapped in the bowels of South Bald Rock. After some very enjoyable exploring and contorting, we emerged from the cold cavern into the warmth of the winter sun where we revitalised ourselves with a gourmet lunch.

We spent the rest of the afternoon in a casual saunter through the open forest along a picturesque creek to a beautiful camp-site on a grassy flat above a waterfall. The sun sank behind Mt Norman in the west as we prepared the evening meal. The stars were magnificent. We sat around

some brave souls who tried to eke out an existence in it before the area became a National Park.

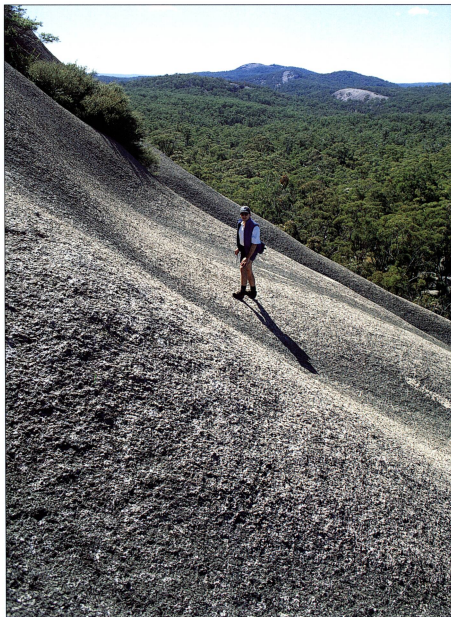
Billy Goat Hill was our next objective and we approached it from the south. The climb was to provide a challenge and we found a winding route through jumbles of large rocks. From the top we again had excellent views as we looked across to the Twins, the Aztec Temples and towards the Underground River. From here, we headed east following a compass bearing through the open forest and grassland until we reached the fire track near Bald Rock.

Half an hour later we dropped our packs next to the cars. We decided not to climb Bald Rock but to leave it for the next trip to this beautiful part of the world. 🐾

Gary Tischer

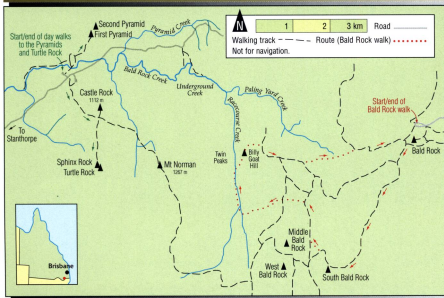
began contributing to *Wild* in issue no 11. He is an active bushwalker who has walked extensively in Queensland and New South Wales.





Michael Weare testing the friction on South Bald Rock.

Girraween and Bald Rock

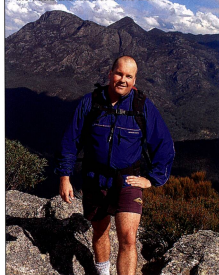


You can explore the base of the Sphinx and scramble into rock-pile caves and chasms. A cool wind was blowing so we found a protected spot for our morning tea and afterwards continued a few hundred metres to Turtle Rock.

An outcrop of similar proportions to Turtle Rock is just next to it and I led my entourage round it in a clockwise direction to a huge, sickle-shaped crack no wider than 40 centimetres that disappears into the mysterious darkness. Some 23 years ago I was told about this cave and, since exploring it, I have referred to it as the Hermits Cave. On my first visit when I entered the dimly lit, main cavern I noticed an old, rusty jam-tin billy sitting on remnants of a fire and a bundle of rotting hessian sacks which I suspected had been used for bedding. Whenever I visit the cave I wonder about the person who used to live here. Standing at the entrance was not the best time to tell a story about a hermit but I did anyway, much to my daughter's horror. We side-stepped and squeezed through the first ten metres of the 50 metre journey in single file. We then crawled into absolute darkness; the ground is a little uneven and there is a risk of hitting your head so, reluctantly, I used the headtorch. In the main cavern many shafts of light enter the cave. An exit groove brought us out at the

Dave Moss

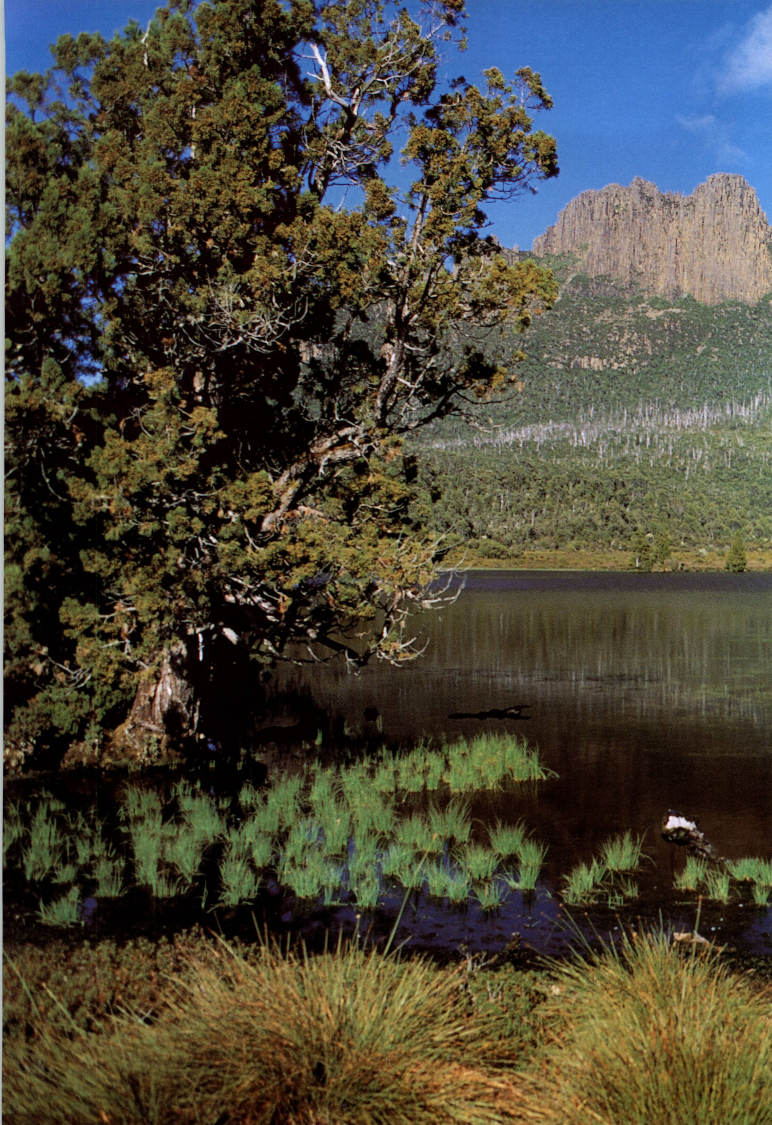
first visited the Stanthorpe region 30 years ago. He loves to camp and explore and he has enjoyed introducing his children and friends to the tracks and features in the area.

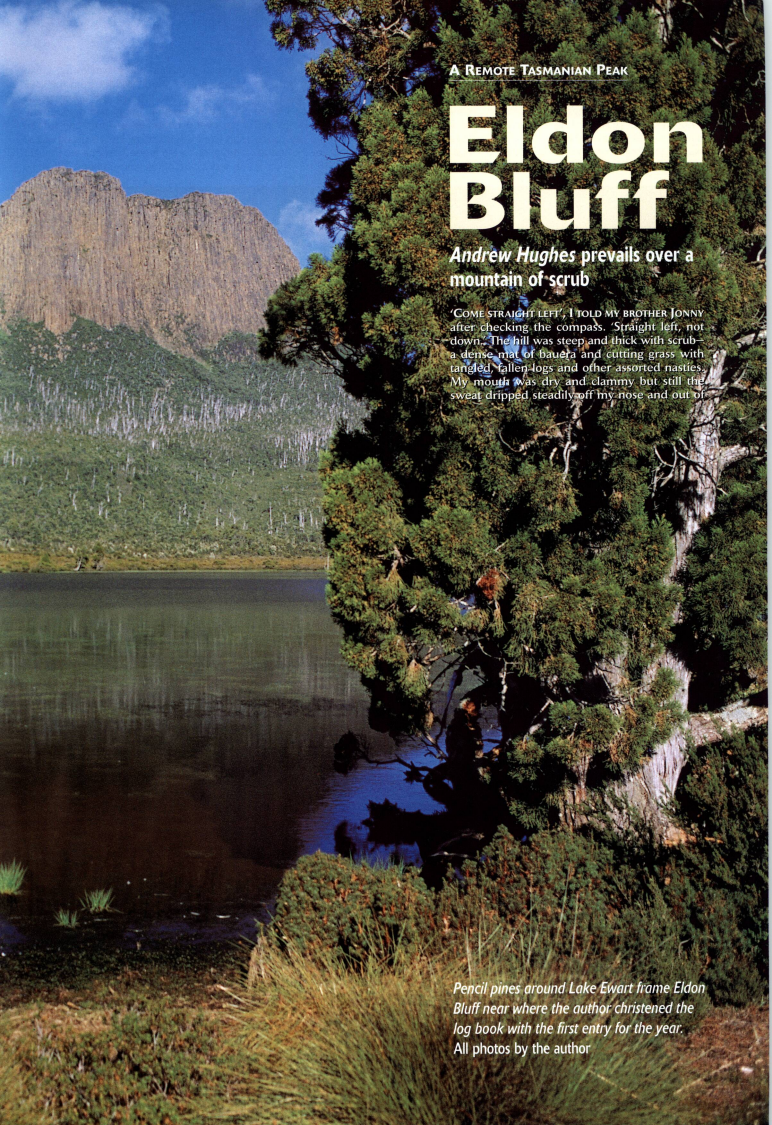


foot of Turtle Rock. Everyone wanted to do it again.

Turtle Rock is a two-tiered scramble; to reach its back you have to climb up a steep crevice. At times it is as wide as your body and requires some strenuous chimney moves. To climb on to the head of the turtle requires technical climbing moves above a 20 metre drop—this is not recommended for inexperienced scramblers.

We left for home the next day knowing that we will be back again soon. We have our sights set on Mt Norman. 🏠





A REMOTE TASMANIAN PEAK

Eldon Bluff

Andrew Hughes prevails over a mountain of scrub

'COME STRAIGHT LEFT', I TOLD MY BROTHER JONNY after checking the compass. 'Straight left, not down.' The hill was steep and thick with scrub—a dense mat of *Bauera* and cutting grass with tangled, fallen logs and other assorted nasties. My mouth was dry and clammy but still the sweat dripped steadily off my nose and out of

Pencil pines around Lake Ewart frame Eldon Bluff near where the author christened the log book with the first entry for the year.
All photos by the author

every pore. Tiny, pointed leaves and twigs from the tea-tree and melaleuca swam in the sweat around my neck and worked their way down my back. Legs heavy with exhaustion were challenged by the cursed bauera vine as it thwarted every step. There was no expression on my face—it would be wasted energy. We made slow, determined

direction he'd slipped and rolled about ten metres down the hill. Scrambling back up the slope he'd lost his footing again and gone down face first. In a freak accident a broken stem of cutting grass had speared straight up his nose. He'd called out to me but I hadn't heard over the noise of scrub-bashing.

from a thousand filthy hangovers. I was filling up the water bladder from the shallow tarn when I heard the unmistakable sound of retching. Jonny had draped himself over a button-grass clump and true to his word was emptying his salami-and-cheese lunch on to the ground. At first we thought it was a case of overconsumption. When he



Above, not a happy camper: Jonny Hughes after getting a stick up the nose while grappling with thick scrub. Right, climbing High Dome. Eldon Bluff is in shadow in the background.

progress towards our objective, a raised button-grass plateau overlooking Lake Ewart and the ultimate prize, Eldon Bluff. If we missed the plateau we would dive into a deep river valley.

I stopped; everything was silent, Jonny wasn't behind me any more. I called out; no answer. I yelled; still no answer. Ten minutes later with rising anxiety I heard a faint call. 'Come straight across, not down', I yelled with angry relief. He couldn't have heard what I said but at least he'd be coming in the right direction. When he flopped limply beside me, I knew that he was hurting more than I was. Blood was dribbling from his nose and his whole face was a flustered, pale colour. His eyes shut as he rested awkwardly against his pack. 'What happened to you?' My curiosity was aroused.

'Had a tumble, stick up the nose.' His eyes were still shut. Not long after I'd changed

'I'm going to drink until I'm sick', Jonny told me as we pushed through the last barrier before easy walking on button grass. 'Stop at the first tarn we get to, we'll have to camp there.' That was fine by me. At the start of the day we'd filled up our water-bottles and expected to find refills along the

'Breeding season, which can make anyone a little grumpy, makes our legless friends quite aggressive.'

way. In the morning we'd climbed High Dome, a prominent, three-humped mountain, and swallowed the last drops on top. It had been a long, hot afternoon and we were both exhausted. We pitched the tent and guzzled water like drunks waking up

repeated the exercise after each sip of water during the evening, we knew that it was more serious. 'We can't drink the water.' He heaved from a buckled-over position.

'But it's not making me sick, I'm knackered but I feel fine.' I answered.

I was referring to the royal "we", he countered with commendable poise before he began to retch again. The unpleasantness was compounded because every purge reopened the wound in his nose. Blood and vomit, I noted with more disgust than concern.

Next morning dawned; Eldon Bluff caught the early rays and glowed a tantalising orange. The sheer, 200 metre dolerite cliffs mark the eastern end of the Eldon Range. It was the primary goal of our walk and was now less than three kilometres away down a hill and round a lake. Jonny ruled himself unfit for duty and retired to a sitting position for the day. I set off with the essentials in my pack: camera, jacket, water-



bottle, maps, compass, sweets and lunch. It was new country for me. Veteran Tassie bushwalker Fred Dutton had told me before we left: 'There's an obvious climbing gully, can't miss it...don't miss it.' That was the extent of my information for this section of the walk.

Dropping into the shores of Lake Ewart, I marvelled at the new, close-up perspective of the Bluff. With an entrepreneurial eye I surveyed the scene. A plush, two-storey lodge could go on that mound, a helipad right about there, the chair-lift to the summit could launch from there—just perfect. The ancient pencil pines fringing the shores could be milled and we wouldn't even need to buy timber! Would we need to run power lines in or could we get away with a diesel generator? That'll need costing. I wandered on and spied a man-made structure. What's this, has someone beaten me to the punch? Luckily not, it was only a Parks & Wildlife remote-walker logbook in a metal box. I scanned the pages and with concern jotted down the first entry since it was cleared two months earlier. Club Eldon's membership numbers obviously need reviewing.

The sun had brought out the snakes. Coiled up on button-grass tufts were occasional little whip snakes and a couple of larger tiger snakes. Breeding season, which can make anyone a little grumpy, makes our legless friends quite aggressive. Snake bite, although unlikely, played on my mind as I swished between the clumps with growing wariness. Would I make it back up the hill to Jonny? In his state would that do me any good, anyway? The nearest help was two torturous days distant at the highway.

Button grass behind me, I re-entered the scrub. It was thick enough that I was persuaded to try to follow the creek. At first it was choked closed with overhanging branches and fallen logs but after I persevered it opened into an incredible 'yellow-brick road'. Instead of a deep, narrow channel, it formed a wide, gentle cascade. A thin film of mountain water slid over the sedimentary beds that underlie most of the dolerite peaks in Tasmania. By staying on the edge I avoided the slippery slime and made easy progress towards the Bluff. My luck continued when I veered away from the creek; I encoun-

like a tormented puffer-fish I strutted to and fro on the expansive summit plateau overlooking my new dominion. 'Thou shalt not bite animals unless they bite you first.' I boomed and, pleased with the cleverness of my first decree, I added: 'And thou shalt remove addictive substances from carbonated drinks.' I thought this was sensible considering my susceptible nature. With no one to slap me down I'd morphed from ordinary bushwalker into tyrant king. We all need a bit of slapping down.

Back to camp to check on the patient. Good news, a stick-up-nose-related headache and lethargy were Jonny's only lingering symptoms. The next morning we began to retrace our steps for the return journey—not an appealing prospect. We found a better line up the first scrubby hill but the exertion caused Jonny to suffer a relapse and breakfast had another showing. With hindsight perhaps I wasn't sympathetic enough. Comments like, 'better out than in', and my own mimicked vomit noises were met



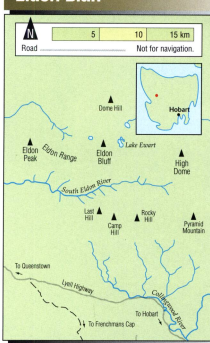
'We pitched the tent and guzzled water like drunks waking up from a thousand filthy hangovers.'

with angry and laboured gestures. Reaching a tarn below High Dome, we stopped. It was lunch-time and Jonny couldn't continue. The little he had eaten in the last couple of days never had a chance to convert into precious energy and he was dead on his feet. On a flat track we might have nudged on but pushing through scrub was too much.

The afternoon heated up with a strong north-easterly and I vacillated between a shady but fly-ridden nook under the melaleuca and a fly-free

but steamy rest in the tent. I detest flies and their filthy maggot planters with a passion and opted for the tent. Emerging late in the afternoon in a lather of sweat I minced around the camp-site in my underpants and hat to cool down. Jonny was happily reading in the shade and convincing ants of their folly in crawling on him. 'Look here, ant, if you walk around here I'll leave you be, but if you bite me you'll die; that's the law.' (I'd told him about my Eldon Bluff edicts.) Apparently his illness was triggered exclusively by exercise—when resting he showed only the vaguest of symptoms. Centrelink wouldn't believe it but I did.

Eldon Bluff



At the end of the long, wet, final day the author and his brother were confronted by a final obstacle. Jonny Hughes swims the flooded river with all his gear in a pack liner.

tered only light scrub before the final climb. The climbing gully is as obvious as I'd hoped and approaching it from my direction it would be difficult to miss. Just look for the green mat of the glorious, endemic lily *Milipania densiflora* with its large, cream-coloured flowers. Near the top the gully narrows and becomes impassable. A short scramble up a series of ledges and I was on top of Eldon Bluff.

It felt better than usual, a lot better. I could almost stretch my imagination to understand the feelings of pioneering explorers and how they must have rippled with pride and privilege at their discoveries. Expanding

The next morning he lasted about the same distance and we reached the next prominent hill. With another afternoon to burn I set out to climb Pyramid Mountain. Without the resistant dolerite cap the sedimentary beds have weathered evenly to form a symmetrical, sloping summit. Along the ridge I

The rain started that afternoon and I scurried back to camp. During the night the wind threatened to lose control but remained modest. We still had about 14 kilometres to walk back to the car and I hoped to knock it off the next day. After breakfast the clouds cleared and we packed up—the overnight

inside a thunderstorm. I love storms but I prefer to view them from the shelter of a balcony with a cup of coffee and a sweet biscuit. It became necessary to keep moving to prevent the cold wind from cutting too deeply. The worst of the storm lasted less than 20 minutes and it settled down to ordinary wind and rain. A couple of yabbies had surfaced to see what all the commotion was about. On another day I might have threatened them with a pot of boiling water but after a rough week I was feeling a little closer to nature. Besides, I'd get a bigger feed if I bit my own tongue.

Within an hour the sky was more blue than grey and we shed our sodden jackets. The predictable rain of clouds obscured Frenchmans Cap but otherwise it had lifted completely. Our path down the last long ridge was reasonably clear and we made good time on an overgrown track. Fatigue set in down the last hill before the river as both of us slipped and fell repeatedly. Fortunately, the road was in sight and I wouldn't have cared if I rolled all the way to its verge.

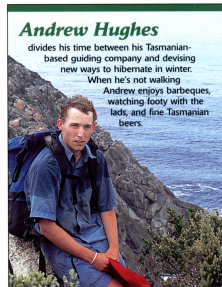
The river looked swollen. A probing stick confirmed that the waist-deep water had become head deep. 'We're going over', Jonny said determinedly, 'I'm not spending another night out; I can't'. We took everything out of the packs and extracted our pack liners. Then we shoved everything back in and covered the packs with the pack liners. Stripped down to thermals I plopped over the bank, one hand holding my pack



Jonny Hughes keeps an eye on dinner below the humps of High Dome.

spotted what I thought were old track markers. 'What track?' I wondered. I've since learned that they're original National Park boundary markers. The route to the summit was obvious although at one stage, not far from the summit climb, I resorted to hands and knees to get through a few thick patches of *Richea scoparia*. 'I am a wombat', I advised myself, 'and this is my chosen habitat'.

front appeared to have passed. Within 15 minutes the clouds had massed again and began to descend. Misty drizzle developed into steady rain. The first smash of thunder jolted me to a standstill—or maybe my eardrums had just exploded? I turned to Jonny to check. Soon visibility could be measured in metres and the rain formed a solid wall of water. Jonny confirmed that we were now



liner closed and the other hand paddling. Jonny followed and we trudged back to the road. A passing motorist gave us a quizzical look. We returned it with contented smiles and crossed to the car. 'Never, never, never am I going back there', Jonny told me, 'but that was a damn fine walk'. The pleasure of prevailing through hardship, no matter if it's self-imposed, is indisputable. ■

Warning: All approaches to Eldon Bluff and the Eldon Range are very difficult. It is a remote region in a wild state. Only experienced bushwalkers with good information should attempt a walk in this area. This article and the ambiguous route described should not be used to plan a walk.

A Canyon Somewhere

Getting into canyoning, by *Sven Klinge*

One by one, we plunged into the dusky water, heating up against the hurrying stream in complete darkness. After ten or fifteen metres the narrow passage turned and culminated in what seemed to be a circular chamber. Far overhead, a gleam of reflected light dimly illuminated a torrent as it dropped from

of an adrenalin rush and rockclimbers seek places to use their skills. The canyons of the Blue Mountains and in particular Wollemi National Park are among the last frontiers of exploration and new canyons are still being discovered.

It all began during the Second World War when Sydney University Bush-



Left, two canyoners hoof it with their Lilos to the next stretch of water.

Above, you can do it facing any direction! All photos were taken in Wollangambe Canyon by David Noble

the sunny world above into the inky pit in which we sat...I marvelled at the extraordinary place, deep in the womb of the mountain, into which a stream had so persistently found its way.

(Paddy Pallin, Never Truly Lost)

DRIVING ALONG THE BELLS LINE OF ROAD on a summer weekend, you will see a multitude of cars parked on both sides of the road. If you pass early enough, there will be throngs of parties donning wet suits and packing ropes before disappearing into the trackless bush on either side of the road.

Canyoning has become more popular in recent years as bushwalkers want more

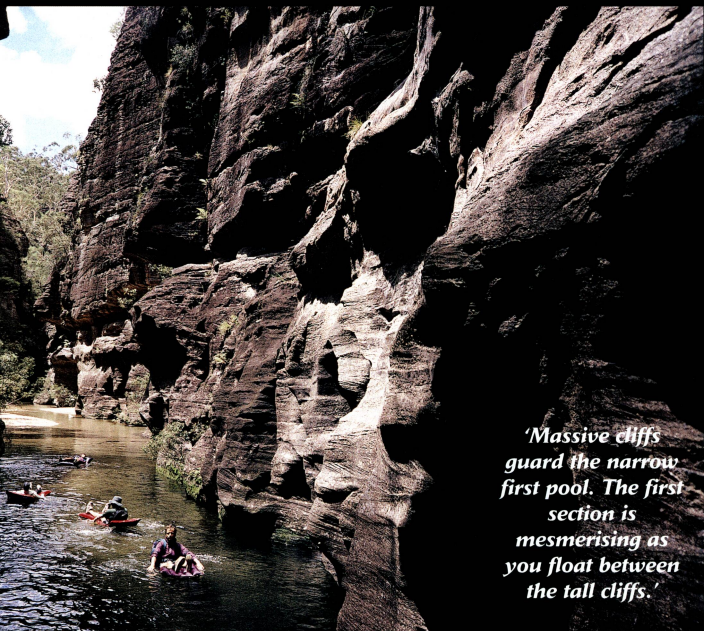
walkers began to investigate the narrow, cliff-lined creeks near Medlow Bath and Blackheath before opening up the rich labyrinth east of Mt Banks. These days, canyons such as Claustal and Thunder are legendary and their subterranean depths are the focus of many adventures. In the Wollemi National Park, Rocky Creek Canyon is also a classic for its depth and beauty; it was discovered by enthusiast David Noble in 1976. A number of canyons have acquired colourful names over the years, such as Heart-attack, Anaconda, Hellgate, Golgotha, Starlight, and Kelvinator. Lately, veterans of the sport have begun to explore the canyons in the absence of the vociferous

masses at night when the glow-worms create a special ambience.

Many canyons have tricky entry abseils, sometimes in darkness, and rockclimbs to exit. It often helps if you go with someone who's been there before as there aren't any formed tracks and navigation is tricky. Experience, fitness and athletics are required for these most difficult ventures.

Preparation

Don't pack anything that shouldn't get wet. If you must, ensure that all items are very well protected. Wrapping them in a plastic shopping bag with a rubber band isn't good enough. At least three



'Massive cliffs guard the narrow first pool. The first section is mesmerising as you float between the tall cliffs.'

plastic bags are required. If in doubt, test it in the bath or a pool first or buy a waterproof bag—SealLine manufactures a number of watertight containers. A change of clothes for the end of the day is a good idea if you can keep them dry. Otherwise, leave them in the car. Water from the Wollangambe, like from most canyons, is clean and drinkable so water doesn't have to be carried except for the strenuous walk out at the end of the day.

It might seem like overkill but you're better off taking an overnight pack than a day pack as it will be more comfortable when you're sitting on your Lilo (air mattress). The most comfortable position for the longer pools is to float through sitting up on the Lilo, feet forward and leaning on your pack. This allows you to move swiftly when paddling. It's worth while to get a good quality Lilo that is stronger, less likely to puncture on the rocks and sits higher in the water. Pumps take a lot of the hard work out of inflating your Lilo and recent models are made with inbuilt pumps. It is common

for Lilos to develop small leaks but it is possible to continue for several hours before they need to be reinflated.

Sport sandals are popular for canyoning as they provide support and grip. However, for the walk in and out, normal walking boots are recommended. Ensure that they are worn in or that you are taped up as wet boots can accelerate blistering.

Photographers should take a high-speed film rated at 200 ASA or higher as the canyons have deep shadows. Good-quality slide film handles the extremes in contrast better than normal print film.

Safety

Canyons are not without their dangers—hypothermia, injury from falls and fatigue are ever-present risks. Canyoners can get stuck on twisted ropes or find that they're unable to pull ropes once they reach the bottom of an abseil. These may all necessitate embarrassing and painful rescues so prusiking loops or other ascending devices are a necessity.

Thunderstorms are also a problem as they make for changeable conditions. To negotiate a flooded canyon is awkward at best and dangerous at worst. It is not advisable to visit canyons after heavy rain. Wait several days for water-levels to subside.

One way to make quick progress is to enrol in a course with adventure companies licensed to take tour groups through canyons. Instruction on correct abseiling procedures and the use of a complete set of equipment are among the benefits of such courses. Armed with this knowledge and experience, you can explore new areas more confidently.

Where to begin

An ideal introduction to canyoning is just north of sleepy Mt Wilson where the Wollangambe River snakes its way between majestic sandstone cliffs. Bushwalkers can explore the watercourse with little more than a Lilo and none of the ropes, harnesses and descendeurs required elsewhere. This is by far the

most popular canyoning attraction in Australia and cars are often backed up for kilometres. Mt Wilson, formerly known only for its up-market gardening displays, now attracts people of all ages who are lured to the myriad of canyons surrounding the township.

There are two distinct parts of the main Wollangambe Canyon, known as Wollangambe One and Wollangambe Two. Both can be reached by a 40–50 minute walk from the road. Each stage can be done comfortably in a day. There are no technically difficult sections, although Lilos have to be hauled over the boulders that occasionally block the river. The dark water is invariably cold and a wet suit is recommended for all but the hottest days. If you want to avoid the crowds go during the week in summer, and not during school holidays.

The Wollangambe Canyons are ideal to get a taste of what canyoning is like. In most cases, it's addictive! By the time people get to Wollangambe Two, they're beginning to explore some of the more dramatic side canyons that meet the Wollangambe, such as Whungee-Whungee or Serendipity.

Canyons are extremely fragile environments and enthusiasts should try to practise low-impact principles by entering and exiting without leaving a trace of their presence. Yabbies (freshwater

crayfish) are very common and should be left alone. Other wildlife includes fish, eels, lizards, glow-worms, and spiders. The old habits of hammering in anchor bolts, installing fixed lines and marking signs are strongly discouraged.

Wollangambe One

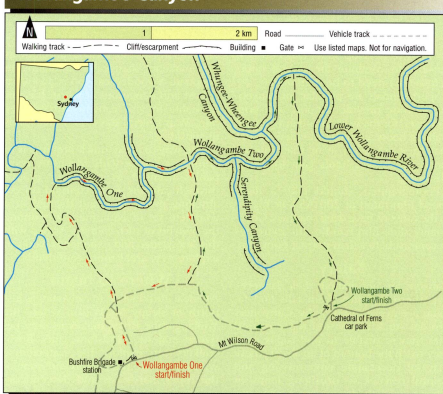
This is the most popular starting-point for beginners. The jump-off point is the new Bushfire Brigade station on the west side of the Mt Wilson road as it turns sharply to the

east. It's about one kilometre after you ascend the hill and arrive at Mt Wilson. National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) signs at the car park provide broad information and warnings about the canyons.

On the day, allow plenty of time as it takes most parties about seven hours to complete the circuit, although the distances are quite short. Aim to leave the car park before 10 am in summer and 8 am in winter. Wet suits are highly recommended at any time of the year but you can get away



Wollangambe Canyon



The lunch-time congestion is enough to give you indigestion.

with not wearing one if it's a real scorcher. A short-sleeved, surfing-style wet suit is ideal—you can also buy specialist canyoning wet suits with thicker protection against the abrasion to which they are inevitably exposed. Woollen jumpers are effective insulators, even when soaking wet.

From the car park head past the locked gate walking north along the old four-wheel-drive track through pleasant, fern-dominated open forest. The vegetation is lush due to the basalt soil. After walking beside some private property you soon come to a T-intersection with another old vehicle track. Turn right and walk briefly north-east along this track. This is also the return route.

Turn off this track almost immediately on to a walking track on the left that heads downhill through a green understorey. As you leave the basalt and emerge into traditional sandstone country, the vegetation is dominated by eucalypts. After about 30 minutes, you will encounter some rocky outcrops with good views to a jumble of ridges and spurs ahead. Turn right following the walking track down to the Wollangambe River

by way of a small gully. The total distance from the car park is 2.5 kilometres and a descent of about 335 metres. The landing is a popular place to inflate Lilos and change into wet suits.

The entrance to the canyon is spectacular. Massive cliffs guard the narrow first pool. The first section is mesmerising as you float between the tall cliffs. As you examine the

orchids. Keep an eye out for another canyon on the left—it's quite narrow. A large, open beach on a right-hand bend with an overhanging tree is a popular lunch spot.

The last section comprises a series of shorter pools and some wading and walking is required over rocky parts. A large break in the cliffs on the right is the exit point (GR 559914 on the *Wollangambe* map).

Green Room in Whungee-Wheengee Canyon on the way. This is well worth doing as you get a taste of a more difficult and technical canyon without having to do anything dangerous.

Instead of parking your car at the Bushfire Brigade station, travel along the Mt Wilson road for several kilometres to the Cathedral of Ferns car park with its prom-



It's a tough trip!

precipitous walls you will notice numerous curved semicircles. These were hollowed out by rocks and pebbles swirling during deluges when the canyon was formed. Powerful whirlpools would form in the infant canyon and the flood waters would gouge the sides. Keep an eye out for spiders with unusually long leg spans although they're quite harmless. Small skinks can often be seen sunbathing on the rocks.

You soon come to a big block-up; unfortunately the Lilos must be hauled for a considerable distance over massive boulders. Be careful on the slippery rocks—sliding on your bum is often the best option. It takes about 20 minutes to negotiate this obstacle.

Once you are into the next pool, it's plain sailing for almost the entire distance. This is the most beautiful section of the canyon: its steep walls are vegetated with ferns and

There is a flat, sandy platform amid the block-up where you can deflate Lilos and get out of your wet suit. You then return to the car park by heading straight up the right side of the gully and negotiating two ledges by climbing some tree roots. This entails a bit of a scramble and the packs will be heavy with wet gear but it isn't too difficult. The track then becomes well defined. After ascending the spur, it flattens out slightly before climbing again to meet a fire track. Turn right and follow this vehicle track back to the car park. From the river it takes about an hour.

Wollangambe Two

The sequel starts precisely where you finished on the previous day. This canyon is a little longer than Wollangambe One, especially when you include a side-trip into the

inert picnic- and camping ground on the south side. Once again, NPWS signs by the road provide some broad information on the canyons.

Head down the fire track on the north past a locked gate, then contour Mt Wilson. After about 30 minutes turn right, then drop into a gully and climb steeply up the other side. You soon come to the walking track turn-off on the right. This is the exit spur for Wollangambe One. Head down this well-defined track to the river. Some ledges have to be negotiated but there are plenty of hand- and footholds. In all it should take about an hour from the car park.

The first section of the canyon is a series of large boulders and some awkward scrambling is necessary. You will reach the calm water after about 30 minutes and the pools get better and better between block-

ups. There are also plenty of opportunities to dive where the water is sufficiently deep, and the sandy beaches are a perfect place for lunch.

Keep an eye out for Serendipity Canyon (also known as Why Don't We Do It in the Road?) on the right—you often hear it before you see it as the entrance is tiny. As you float downstream, some further sections of the river get quite narrow and, at times, you can almost touch the walls on both sides.

Whungee-Whungee is on the left at an angle. This is a popular, technical canyon because it is relatively easy to reach. It is recommended that you leave Lilos here and put on some extra clothing as the water and the air temperature are considerably colder than the Wollangambe. Some wading is required in an initial short pool before you reach a flat, narrow section. This is only about one or two metres wide and remarkably deep. The midday sun penetrates the bottom for just a few minutes each day. It's easy to see that most of these canyons aren't visible from the air. As you progress, more boulders appear and on top is the magnificent Green Room, an exquisitely beautiful grotto comprised of ferns in every direction. It is possible to explore a little further up the canyon but steep walls soon bar your progress.

Once you've returned to the Wollangambe River, continue downstream for about an hour by a succession of pools of various depths. Another block-up requires that you haul the Lilo briefly. What follows is an especially awe-inspiring section of can-

yon between towering cliffs. The Waterfall of Moss Canyon is on the left at the top of a steep, moss-covered wall.

The exit is on the right at a break in the cliffs opposite a small gully on the northern bank. The exit is only 200 metres beyond the last block-up at a very prominent right turn as marked on the *Wollangambe* map (GR 570923). The landing is quite small and may become crowded as parties congregate on completion of Wollangambe Two and the

wards Mt Irvine. However, this is less popular due to the rougher nature of the canyon. It is possible to miss exit points, some of which require advanced rockclimbing skills.

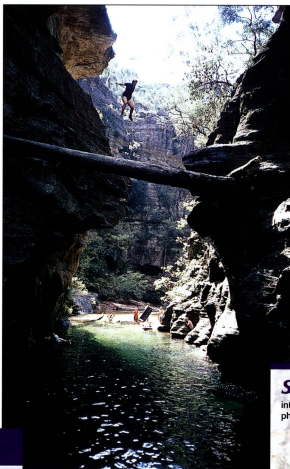
Further exploration

If the Wollangambe has whet your appetite, why not try the following two easy canyons? They also feature long pools and Liloing. These canyons are just to the west of Mt Wilson and are colder than the Wollangambe, so bring plenty of warm clothing.

Du Fours Canyon. Follow a fire track south from Du Fours Rocks Lookout near the Bushfire Brigade station. There are many exit and entry points and long Liloing pools. This canyon can be augmented with short sections of Bell Creek and Upper Wollangambe Canyons.

Bell Creek Canyon. A long, deep and very narrow canyon to the west of Du Fours that is almost crevice-like with curved rock sculpturing. Intermediate canyons will love this challenge. The walk in is long so leave early. Exit by the main Wollangambe River access track.

Try not to be too ambitious when planning canyoning adventures as they are often time-consuming. The inflating and deflating of Lilos, tricky entries and exits and paddling on slow-moving water all take more time than you would think. Rough canyons can be hard work and a



Liloing Wollangambe Canyon

Area	Mt Wilson, Blue Mountains, New South Wales
Grade	Easy
Length	Two (separate) days (six–eight hours each)
Distance	26 kilometres (12 kilometres/14 kilometres)
Variations	Shorter or longer Liloing canyons are near Mt Wilson
Height variation	350–400 metres
Maps	LIC (CMA) <i>Mt Wilson and Wollangambe</i> 1:25 000
Access	From Sydney, travel to Mt Wilson by the Bells Line of Road, about 2.5 hours' drive from the city
Equipment	Inflatable Lilo, wet suit, sport sandals, waterproof containers/bags
Further reading	<i>Canyons Near Sydney</i> , by Rick Jamieson (self-published)

There's always one in every group.

Waterfall of Moss and Whungee-Whungee Canyons. Some great diving ledges are just upstream from the landing.

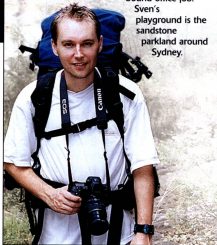
The walking pad back to Mt Wilson heads steeply up a spur and there is only one small ledge where scrambling is required. Like the exit track for Wollangambe One, the track is easy to follow despite thick foliage and scrub. After a long, flat section over a ridge and a steep climb you will re-enter the basalt country where the dry sclerophyll bush turns into lush vegetation. You will reach some old private-property fencing before the track emerges on to a fire track. Head left along the vehicle track, then turn right on to a distinct walking track in rainforest. This soon emerges from the forest on to another fire track. Follow this track to the right (west) down to the Cathedral of Ferns car park. In total the return takes 70–80 minutes.

It is possible to continue down the Wollangambe River, exiting to Farrers Road to-

Sven Klinge's

interests include canyoning, physics and photography—all distractions from a desk-bound office job.

Sven's playground is the sandstone parkland around Sydney.



certain weariness develops after a long day in the cold water, so pack plenty of high-energy food. Nothing saps your energy more than shivering, and a woollen jumper or two are worth while.

The areas east of Mt Banks, particularly the tributaries flowing into Carmarthen Brook, are the principal attraction for canyon enthusiasts in Sydney as it has subterranean chambers, forceful waterfalls and many high, multistage abseils. ☼

The Tallest Trees

Brian Walters sizes up the ancient prize of the giant-hunter

IT IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN THAT THE LARGEST living thing we know of was not a dinosaur or even a whale but an Australian tree.

On 21 February 1872, Victorian government surveyor and Inspector of State Forests William Ferguson reported to Clement Hodgkinson, Assistant Commissioner of State Forests, on his inspection of 'areas that had not been penetrated by the timber splitter or the woodcutter':

Some places, where the trees are fewer and at a lower altitude, the timber is much larger in diameter, averaging from six to ten feet and frequently trees to 15 feet in diameter are met with on alluvial flats near the river. These trees average

**'Mountain ash
(*Eucalyptus
regnans*—monarch
of the eucalypts) is
still the world's
tallest hardwood...'**

about ten per acre: their size, sometimes, is enormous. Many of the trees that have fallen by decay and by bush fires measure 350 feet in length, with girth in proportion. In one instance I measured with the tape line one huge specimen that lay prostrate across a tributary of the Watts and found it to be 435 feet from the roots to the top of its trunk. At five feet from the ground it measures 18 feet in diameter. At the extreme end where it has broken in its fall, it (the trunk) is 3 feet in diameter. This tree has been much burnt by fire, and I fully believe that before it fell it must have been more than 500 feet high. As it now lies it forms a complete bridge across a narrow ravine.

In other words, Ferguson measured the tree (in an area near Healesville, east of Melbourne) from its base to the point where it had broken off in its fall, to be 435 feet (133 metres) and did not measure its crown. Even at 435 feet, there isn't a tree on earth known ever to have surpassed it. However, the information that the tree was still '3 feet' (a metre) in diameter at this point supports the estimate that the tree had been over 500 feet (152 metres) high. It is known as 'the Ferguson Tree'. Mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*—monarch of the eucalypts) is still the world's tallest hard-

wood and the world's tallest flowering plant. Any one of several very tall nineteenth-century trees, if they were alive today, would be the tallest tree in the world, and the tallest of all was the Ferguson Tree.

To place this in context, the tallest Californian redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) at present is the newly measured Stratosphere

However, the tree had broken in its fall and Boyle estimated that the top would be another 30 feet, a total height of approximately 420 feet (128 metres).

- The Thorpdale Tree in South Gippsland, felled in 1880 and measured by surveyor G Cornthwaite to be 375 feet high (114 metres).



Liz Ninnis stands beside a giant tree recently found, within 200 metres of logging, near Toolangi in Victoria's Central Highlands. Bernie Mace

Giant of the Humboldt Redwood State Park, which is 112.7 metres tall (369 feet). The tallest North American tree ever known was a Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), which was measured at 400 feet (122 metres). However, unlike Australia's Ferguson Tree, the giant Douglas fir was not professionally measured and verified, so it remains a tantalising anecdote. Other Australian trees of which we have reasonably reliable records from the nineteenth century were:

- A tree at Mt Baw Baw measured by surveyor CW Robinson before 1889 to be 470 feet (143 metres) in height.
- The Centennial Exhibition Tree from the Menzies Creek area, which was measured after felling at 400 feet (122 metres). The tree was felled so that its spectacular trunk could be dismantled and then reassembled for a display in the 1888 centennial exhibition in Melbourne.
- A fallen tree in the Dandenong Ranges measured by surveyor David Boyle in 1862 to be 392 feet (119 metres) high.

Trees which were huge but would not top existing trees in North America are:

- Olongolah Tree near Beech Forest in the Otways, which was measured by an unnamed Colac Shire engineer before 1900 (an exact date was not recorded) to be 347 feet (106 metres).
- The Neerim Giant was measured by a government surveyor to be 325 feet (99 metres). However, it had a broken top and must once have been considerably taller. This tree was destroyed by fire early in the twentieth century.
- In 1939 in Toorong Forest, Noojee, a fallen tree was measured by Inspector of Forests, FG Gerraty, to be 348 feet (106 metres). This tree is known as the Gerraty Tree.

The tallest trees we know of today in Australia are:

- The Big Tree in the Styx valley, Tasmania, is generally recognised to be Australia's tallest tree at 92 metres (it was once higher but has been struck by lightning).



There are many tall trees in the area, but the 'Valley of the Giants' is already subject to logging.

- The extraordinary manna gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) in the Evercreech Reserve in north-eastern Tasmania is 90 metres high.
- Mr Jessop in the Wallaby Creek catchment in Victoria is 88.5 metres high.
- The Geeston Tree in Tasmania, a much visited tourist attraction, stands at 87 metres, although it is broken at the top.
- The Big Tree in the Cumberland Fall Trees Reserve in Victoria is now 84

metres tall, but was 92 metres before a storm broke its top off in 1959.

It is a source of shame for Australians that our forefathers destroyed giant trees that would be wonders of the world today. Many huge trees were destroyed and for many there are no measurements. In some cases, the trees were cut down and burnt, often in places so inaccessible that they would never have been useful for grazing.

Trees were hunted down and the challenge of destroying these ancient giants was taken on with gusto. Old photographs of people

expect to be execrated for generations to come, but we all share the responsibility.

Logging continues in the wild forests of East Gippsland and the Central Highlands of Victoria, both areas with huge, old trees. Might there be tall trees out there still? Perhaps the tallest tree in the world? Who knows? In the past few years we have discovered a new species of eucalypt in East Gippsland, the Wollemi pine in the Blue Mountains and the world's oldest known tree on Mt Dean in Tasmania. We are still finding unexpected things in the Australian bush.

But we have lost so much already. In the nineteenth century people didn't know any better, but we do. We know that logging causes a loss of water yield for up to 150 years; we know that very few people are employed by the industry; we know that the industry enjoys substantial public subsidies; we know that wildlife is killed by logging and this often includes endangered species. We know that once an ancient tree is cut down, it cannot be replaced for many human generations and that an ecosystem laid waste by clear-felling may never recover. We know that there are ready and viable alternatives—including the use of plantation timber. We know that the alienation of our nation from its land is causing immense environmental and personal damage, and logging provides the most dramatic illustration.

It is time to stop. 🇦🇺



Above, the Bulga Stump was famous for its huge girth of 34 metres (111 feet) GBH (girth at breast height), which was probably the largest ever measured in Australia. Its height is a mystery as it was consumed by the 1939 bushfires and was probably a broken 'stag' when found in the late nineteenth century.

Left, the magnificent Mueller Tree (later Furmstons Tree) on the Monda Track near Healesville was one of the largest examples of mountain ash near Melbourne. This group of field naturalists visited in the 1930s.

metres tall, but was 92 metres before a storm broke its top off in 1959.

- The Ada Tree near Powelltown is 76 metres high.
- Furmstons Tree (also known as the Mueller Tree) near Mt Monda was a broken-topped stag, only 60 metres high, when it finally fell in May 1998. This magnificent tree was more than 300 feet high when it was first discovered in the late nineteenth century but was measured in 1935 by Furmston to be 287 feet (87 metres) with a broken top.

A number of people have searched enthusiastically for tall trees in Tasmania and Victoria and there have been some exciting

in the forest frequently show an axe as if it were a statement of manhood against the uncivilised immensity of the forest.

What does it take to have tall trees grow? One factor is time. Hundreds of years are required for the trees to grow—after millennia of nutrients building up as trees grow and decay. Another factor is a large area of forest. Trees grow upwards when competing for light and can grow very tall when they are protected from wind and storms by a large number of other tall trees.

We have not yet learned. The Styx valley in Tasmania now contains Australia's tallest known trees. It is being logged. Any administration that knowingly permits this should

Brian Walters

A co-founder of Wild, Brian Walters is passionate about the Australian outdoors, where he has been walking and skiing for decades—most recently with his family.

A Melbourne barrister, he is active in a range of environmental and social justice issues.



Since this article was written, Brett Milsud has obtained access to the Wallaby Creek catchment in Victoria to conduct some accurate measurements. Mr Jessop has been remeasured at a disappointing 83.5 metres. However, another unnamed Wallaby Creek giant has been discovered and accurately measured at 91.6 metres (just over 300 feet). This giant is 300 years old with an unbroken top and is in perfect health. There are plenty of trees around it to protect it and keep it growing.

In October 2001 Milsud and Tom Greenwood measured the Mount Tree in the Andromeda Reserve Group, Styx valley, at 96.5 metres (about 314 feet). This is now the tallest known tree in Australia.

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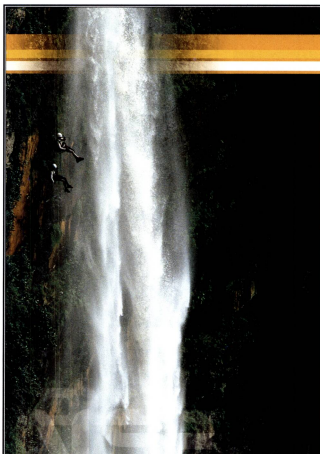
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Bushwalking boots

John Chapman does some sole searching

THE DEBATE ABOUT BOOTS VERSUS RUNNERS is a hot topic in clubs and news groups but often the piece of walking equipment least talked about on trips is footwear. Probably it's because what suits one person has little to do with what works for another and boots tend not to be noticed when they work well. Some people advocate runners for everything but most would agree that boots provide the best protection and perform well in wet, cold conditions.

Boots have changed dramatically during the last two decades. Many models look the same but weigh significantly less. Most manufacturers make boots that span the gap between runners and traditional, one-piece leather boots. It's no longer a simple choice between cheap runners or leather boots as there is a wide range in between the two.

This survey is concerned with boots for bushwalking. It does not include runners or 'approach shoes'. The brands included are generally available in outdoors shops in most States. Each supplier was asked to nominate three models for general-purpose bushwalking. Most brands make more than three

Buy right

- The best advice is to get the boots that are most comfortable. Feet vary and manufacturers use a wide array of lasts and designs to cater for as many shapes as possible. Do not expect all models from the same factory to have the same shape, as variety between different models is deliberate.
- Get the right length: ensure that there is some space in front of your longest toes. If you can't decide between two sizes the usual advice is go for the larger one as feet swell and spread on extended walking trips.
- Find the best width: it should be firm but comfortable—avoid excessively tight fits. Getting a good fit will probably reduce your ideal range to only a couple of models—that's one way to choose from the wide variety available.
- Check heel fit: Achilles' tendon problems are rare but very painful. Ensure that your heel fits snugly—it should not slide up and down when you're walking and should not exert excessive pressure at any one place.
- Think of your intended use: this factor has deliberately been put last as it should be considered but is secondary to a good fit. It's better to replace a comfortable boot regularly than to use long-lasting, uncomfortable boots. Nothing will destroy your enjoyment of the outdoors faster than persistent foot problems.



Walking on air? Iain Groves

models and a visit to several shops will show a wider range. The manufacturers produce a large number of models to provide a greater chance of a good fit.

Other brands

Not all manufacturers of boots have been included in the survey. This is not a reflection of the quality of these brands. Manufacturers such as Ecco, Meindl and Bunyip were not included as they are not widely available.

The North Face and Raichle are relatively new to Australia and are not yet widely distributed. Montrail's new range of boots is due for release in September.

Suitable for

Heavier and stiffer boots are for rugged walking on extended or multiday trips. The

most popular boots are designed for week-end use. Being lighter and made from more flexible materials it is easier to get a good fit. Boots of this weight are also suitable for use on day walks.

Weight

All boots were weighed on an electronic scale if the weight was not supplied by the manufacturer or importer. All weight ratings in the survey are for size 40, a common female size.

Ankle height

Traditional boots are ankle height and the top of the boot is above the ankle for protection and support. Lower designs are described as 'mid-ankle', which is at about the middle of the ankle ball.

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Kosciuszko's Main Range. Photo by Darren Davis.

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Bushwalking boots

						Suitable for	Weight, grams	Ankle height	Upper material	Waterproof lining	Flexibility	Water resistance	Durability	Value	Approx price, \$
Aku Italy															
	Trail	D/W	560	MA	Combination	Y	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	250				
	UltraLight	D/W	460	MA	Combination	Y	H	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	330				
	Alpen	E	730	AA	Leather	Y	L	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●	330				
Asolo Italy															
	Fusion 40 f	W	600	AA	Leather	N	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	230				
	Fusion 95	E	680	AA	Combination	Y	M	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	330				
	AFX 520	E	700	AA	Leather	Y	L	●●●	●●●	●●●	400				
Garmont Italy/Asia															
	Flash Gore-Tex	D/W	550	MA	Leather	Y	M	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	280				
	Syncro	E	710	AA	Combination	N	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	330				
	Force Full Grain	E	650	AA	Combination	Y	H	●●●	●●●	●●●	350				
Hi-Tec China															
	Wyoming Lite	W/E	515	MA	Leather	N	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	190				
	Transcender 2	E	600	MA	Leather	Y	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	230				
	Altitude	E	515	MA	Leather	Y	M	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	250				
Kathmandu Romania/Italy															
	Hajj Proof	D/W	590	MA	Combination	Y	M	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	280				
	Randomnee	W/E	680	AA	Leather	N	M	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	300				
	Trail	E	800	AA	Leather	N	L	●●●	●●●1/2	●●1/2	380				
La Sportiva Italy															
	Tundra	W	540	MA	Leather	Y	M	●●●	●●1/2	●●	270				
	Storm	W/E	600	AA	Combination	Y	M	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	300				
	Tibet Anfibio	E	685	AA	Leather	Y	L	●●●	●●●	●●●	380				
Rossi Australia															
	254 Cobar f	W/E	535	AA	Leather	N	M	●1/2	●●	●●●	185				
	101 Eclipse	W/E	660	AA	Leather	N	M	●●	●●●	●●●1/2	240				
Salomon France/Romania/Vietnam/China															
	Diridry GTX	W	525	MA	Combination	Y	H	●●1/2	●●	●●1/2	300				
	STF6 GTX f	E	680	AA	Combination	Y	L	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	340				
Scarpa Italy															
	Trek	W/E	650	AA	Leather	N	M	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	280				
	SL	E	900	AA	Leather	N	L	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	360				
	Trek 2 GTX	D/W	710	AA	Leather	Y	M	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	370				
Teva China															
	North Rim f	E	550	MA	Leather	N	M	●●	●●	●●1/2	250				
Trezeta Italy															
	Brixen	W/E	670	AA	Leather	Y	M	●●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	300				
	Janette	W/E	700	AA	Leather	Y	M	●●●	●●●1/2	●●	400				
	Pamir	E	800	AA	Leather	Y	L	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●	400				
Zamberlan Italy															
	Lady Lite	W/E	590	AA	Leather	Y	M	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	330				
	Trail Lite	E	640	AA	Leather	Y	L	●●●	●●●1/2	●●1/2	350				
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Suitable for: D/W day/weekend walking, W weekend walking, W/E weekend/extended (multiday) walking, E extended walking Weight, grams: for one size 40 boot mid-ankle Waterproof lining: Y yes, N no Flexibility: H high, M medium, L low f not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made															

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Suitable for: D/W day/weekend walking, W weekend walking, W/E week-end/extended (multiday) walking, E extended walking Weight: grams: for one size 40 boot Ankle height: AA above ankle, MA mid-ankle Waterproof lining: Y yes, N no Flexibility: H high, M medium, L low f not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Upper material

Fabric trade names are used for many boot uppers. Despite the variety, most are similar and are either leather or synthetic. 'Leather' is used to describe those with 90 per cent or more leather and 'combination' describes an upper made partly from synthetics and partly from leather.

Waterproof lining

Many of the more expensive boots have a waterproof layer—generally Gore-Tex. This layer might seem excellent in principle but it will have to be stitched in and the seam-sealing process is more difficult than in clothing. A layer of Gore-Tex also tends to hold water once it's in, the boots are often hotter in warm climates and the fabric may break down long before the boots wear out, so these liners have positive and negative aspects.

Flexibility

Stiffer boots have been labelled 'low' flexibility and soft soles are labelled 'high'. The rougher the walking conditions, the less flexible the boots should be. Highly flexible boots are intended for well-made tracks and paths—of which there are few in Australia.

Water resistance

No boot is really waterproof as water will get in through the large hole in the top—that will be no surprise to experienced walkers. This rating is based on how soon you can expect water to seep through the sides assuming gaiters or overpants are being used to keep water out. The number of seams, the outer materials and the design affect this rating, which is subjective as there is no easy test for waterproofness.

Durability

Most boots are very durable and will survive for several years. Heavier boots are usually made with stronger and thicker materials and generally last longest. Boots with solid, one-piece uppers, less stitching and few joints were rated higher. This rating is also subjective as boots cannot be tested to destruction.

Value

This is a subjective measure of quality versus cost. How well the boots fit and their durability should also be considered.

Approximate price

The prices listed are based on recommended retail prices in Melbourne shops and information provided by some suppliers.

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *Wild* since issue one. His favourite place is still Tasmania although he regularly visits all other Australian States.

This survey was refereed by Jim Graham.



Lexan® Wine Glass & Flute

GSI Lexan® Wine Glasses & Flutes are the perfect addition for your next camping trip or picnic. The patent-pending design unscrews at the midpoint of the stem, so the base can be compactly snapped into the bowl for packing and storage. Super lightweight and nearly indestructible, yet elegantly shaped.

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Aluminium Bugaboo™ cook-sets are light and the Teflon interior coating makes cleaning a breeze! The sets nest compactly and the lids act as fry pans.

DiamondBack Gripper™ and mesh storage-bag included.

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Glacier Stainless Steel™ cook-sets are finely crafted culinary pieces for the practising gourmet and are crafted from 18/8 stainless steel. The mirror-bright finish looks great! All pieces have rounded corners for easy cleaning and serving. The sets nest compactly and the lids act as fry pans. DiamondBack gripper and mesh storage-bag included. The five- and seven-piece sets include a bonus nylon mini-spatula.



act as fry pans. DiamondBack gripper and mesh storage-bag included. The five- and seven-piece sets include a bonus nylon mini-spatula.

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Treat yourself to an absolutely delicious espresso with these compact little appliances! They are crafted from rugged yet lightweight aluminium. Simply fill the basket with well-ground coffee, add water to valve level and screw the unit shut. Place it on your stove at low heat and within minutes, the steam pipe delivers a flavourful cup of European-style brew. Available in one- and four-cup sizes: red, blue, green or polished.



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perfect cup of fresh coffee. The GSI JavaPress is dishwasher safe, and can also be used for preparing tea! Available in two sizes: 280 ml and 925 ml.

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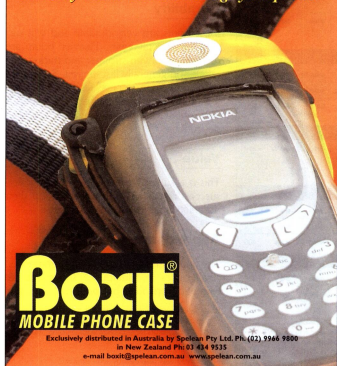


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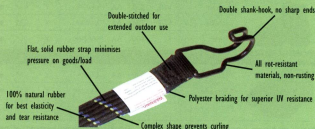
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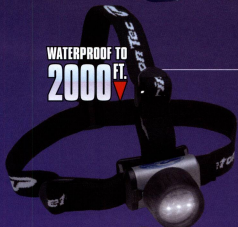
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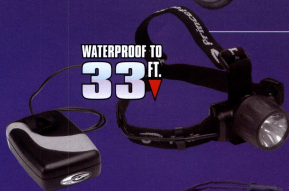
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Headtorches

Shine your light on the world, by *Michael Hampton*

SEASONED OUTDOORS PEOPLE HAVE ENJOYED the hands-free convenience of headtorches for decades. However, selling this simple and brilliant form of illumination has not always been easy. Beside the fear of being mistaken for some kind of subterranean stevedore, the cost of a high-quality headtorch is considerably higher than that of a simple pen-light. If the number of available headtorches is an indication of public acceptance, times are changing. New torches tend to be attractive and compact. Many have LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs and corresponding long battery life. The torches included in this survey are considered suitable for bushwalking, camping and other outdoors pursuits. Other models are appropriate for rescue and commercial activities. Ask your local retailer.

Other brands or models

Not all manufacturers of headtorches have been included in the survey. This is not a reflection of the quality of these brands, rather it indicates that for one of a number of reasons, the brands did not qualify for inclusion.

Silva and TSL were not included as they are relatively new and are not yet widely available. See our Equipment section for information about these products. Other reputable brands in-

cluding Lago and LRI were not considered widely available and were not deemed eligible for inclusion.

It is worth considering that some of the brands included have a wide range of products which were not surveyed.

Weight

The weights indicated include batteries and were provided by the manufacturers. Torches that use powerful, heavy-duty batteries weigh most. Some models have battery and/or globe options.

Batteries

The required number and type of batteries are worth noting as they affect the weight of the torch and some may not be widely available. For obvious reasons batteries are not supplied with torches. The most commonly used batteries are the following: AAA (11 grams), AA (24 grams) and 4.5 volt 'bicycle' batteries (154 grams).

Battery location

Consider what you intend to do while wearing your cyclops eye. Batteries usually sit on the front or back of your head or at your waist. Batteries stored close to the body will perform better in cold conditions.

Globe/s supplied

The number and type of globes supplied are listed in this column. Are spare globes stored on the torch? Halogen globes are brighter but use more battery power, LED globes use less.

Running time

How long will the torch run using the standard globe/battery set-up? The brand and type of battery affect the running time as does the air temperature. These estimates are provided by the manufacturers. How much light is enough? Use this as a guide.

Variable focus

Some torches have a 'wide angle' to 'spotlight' beam range. Many new torches are designed to provide consistent lighting over a set area throughout the life of the batteries.

Angle adjustment

Angle adjustment might save your neck muscles. A simple ratchet system is most common. Torches without adjustment capacity are usually set at a downward angle.

Buy right

- Inspect the torch you intend to buy—the switch, connections and battery-compartment lid should be simple and rugged.
- Try the torch in a dark area. What you see is what you get.
- Many of us carry spare batteries on an overnight excursion solely for our torches. The more efficient your light the less spares you need to carry.
- Consider buying a torch that uses the same batteries as others in your possession. Go for those that use batteries which are widely available. Check the battery voltage and globe compatibility.
- A bump on the head. Battery packs that sit on the back of your head can be inconvenient for bedtime reading.
- Try the torch on and leave it on your head for a while. It is not uncommon to wear a headtorch from sundown to bedtime.
- A torch is of no use when the globe blows. Many torches have storage space for at least one spare globe.
- Are replacement elastic straps widely available?

Fit over helmet

If you engage in activities that require the use of a helmet (mountaineering, caving), it is important that the straps fit over your 'brain bucket'.

Water resistance

How waterproof is the torch? Mountaineers and cavers will use it in wet conditions and water is always an issue in the outdoors.



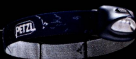
A flash of brilliance?
Michael Hampton

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ZIPKA

The Zipka is the little sister of the Tikka. A roll-up strap system replaces the elasticated headband, making it even more compact and lightweight than the Tikka. The Zipka can be carried on the head, the wrist or the ankle. 64 gm (including batteries)!



TIKKA

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MICRO

MICRO, small and lightweight with a directable and focusable beam. The MICRO is a great, economical lamp for around the campsite, car, or portaledge. 100 gm.



ZOOM

ZOOM, great for night travel, perfectly balanced with a directable and focusable beam via Petzl's patented rotating bezel. Our all-time best seller. 170 gm.



ZOOM ZORA

ZOOM Zora is a new version of the Zoom, with a 6-volt power supply for a longer burn time. 185 gm.



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Headtorches

		Weight, grams	Batteries (number and type)	Battery location	Globe/s supplied	Running time	Variable focus	Angle adjustment	Fit over helmet	Water resistance	Comfort	Function	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Black Diamond USA															
	Lunar	198	3 x AA	B	1 x long-life xenon halogen, 1 x bright xenon halogen	Long-life: 7 hrs Bright: 3.5 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Various globe combinations provide 70–140 m range. Prismatic reflector gives even illumination	80
	Gemini	198	3 x AA	B	1 x superbright LED, 1 x long-life xenon halogen, 1 x bright xenon halogen	LED: 1000 hrs Long-life: 7 hrs Bright: 3.5 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	As above and including switch between bulbs	100
	Moonlight	123	3 x AAA	B	4 x superbright LED	70 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Row of four LEDs provides wide angle with 15 m range	100
	Spaceshot	144 (AA)	Independent, tiny 6V back-up. 6 x AA or 9.6V rechargeable	W	1 x superbright LED, 1 x long-life xenon halogen, 1 x bright xenon halogen	2.5–12 hrs depending on globe/battery combination. Up to 23.5 hrs with low-voltage option	N	Y	Y	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Voltage regulator ensures constant light intensity. Independent batteries/globes back each other up. Less chance of being stuck in dark changing batteries/globes	190
Lucido China															
	T4	191	3 x AA	F	4 x LED	340 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	Globes set in a group rather than a row. Bulkier than other LED models	140
Petal France															
	Micro	148	2 x AA	F	1 x standard (1 spare)	Standard: 9 hrs Quartz halogen: 3 hrs	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Well-established, lightweight model	50
	Zoom	260	3 x AA with adaptor 1 x 4.5V	B	1 x standard (1 spare)	AA standard: 9.5 hrs. AA quartz halogen: 2.3 hrs 4.5V standard: 19 hrs. 4.5V quartz halogen: 5.75 hrs	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	Battery adaptor sold separately. The 'Kingswood' of headtorches although not so good for reading while lying on back	80
	Tikka	70	3 x AAA	F	3 x LED	150 hrs	N	N	N	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	Lightweight and simple	90
	Zipka	64	3 x AAA	F	3 x LED	150 hrs	N	N	N	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	Attaches to any limb. Ideal for standby and incidental use	110
Princeton Tec USA															
	Quest	125	2 x AA	F	1 x long-life bulb	5–6 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●		60
	Aurora	79	3 x AAA	F	3 x LED	160 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Compact and feature-packed. Three LED output levels, two flashing modes	80
	Matrix	125	2 x AA	F	1 x LED, 1 x incandescent	LED: 40 hrs (100 with lithium batteries). Incandescent: 3 hrs	N	Y	Y	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	A very comprehensive light source with constant output converter	130
	Switchback	210 (AA), 680 (C cell)	2 x AA, 4 x C cell	F/W	3 x LED, 1 x dual filament	6–300+ hrs depending on battery/globe combination	N	Y	Y	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	A variety of light/power options with constant output converter	190

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Y yes, N no Battery location: B back of head, F front of head, W waist
The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Comfort

A number of considerations were taken into account for this rating. Weight and battery position are high on the list. I tried on each torch and rated it accordingly. Is there a second strap that goes over the top of your head to spread the load? Are the straps adjustable?

Function

A good headtorch should be easy to operate and maintain.

Value

Considering all the factors listed above, is the torch good value for money? Getting little change for an 'Alpine dollar' (\$100) might hurt but the long-term investment is sound. I've had the same headtorch for more than 15 years.

Comments

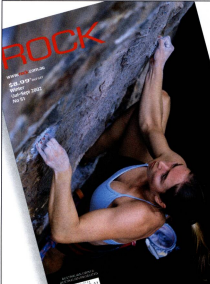
Additional information is noted in this column.

Approximate price

This is the recommended retail price supplied by wholesalers and/or retailers but be aware that prices fluctuate, especially during sales. 🛒

Michael Hampton has been a contributor since *Wild* no 17 and lives near Australia's largest Nordic skiing area, Lake Mountain. A ski instructor, he is happiest exploring snow-laden, alpine-ash forests looking for photographic subjects or gliding over the treeless high plains in search of remote, cross-country downhill adventures.

This survey was refereed by Christopher Bakke.



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† Compared to current Tamron 371D ‡ As of March 1, 2001. Based on Tamron comparisons with lenses in the same class. NB: The lens and Morpho Butterfly photos have been digitally combined. MAX1040

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If you thought your multi/survival/pocket tool had one of everything, take a look at the **Schrade I-Quip**. The main body of the tool has stainless steel blades, screw drivers, a saw, scissors, a tin-opener and more. It also holds a 3.2 centimetre signal mirror, a red LED with a three-volt battery, a lighter compartment and a whistle. In addition there is a computer module which attaches to the case. It has a digital compass, a barometer, a thermometer, an altimeter and a clock/stop-watch/alarm. (No coffee machine, we notice, so it can't be called a *comprehensive* survival tool.) The unit measures 100 x 62 x 55 millimetres and weighs 247 grams. Distributed by **Sheldon and Hammond**, call 1800 209 999 for stockists. RRP \$699.



The Schrade I-Quip tool-of-all-trades.

Due north

The **North Face** has long been a prominent American brand of outdoors gear: its products, including tents, sleeping-bags, packs, clothing and footwear, are now available in Australia. The **Roadrunner 2** is a two-person tent. It has two poles (and a half pole for the fly), two large vestibules and large mesh panels in the doors and windows. It comes with a compression sack and the total weight is 2.65 kilograms. Call **Playcorp** for more information, phone (03) 9863 1133. RRP \$799.

Geared up

Bivitech is a relative newcomer to the world of Australian-made outdoors gear. **Bivitech** focuses on (you guessed it) the design and manufacture of **bivvy bags**: it has more than ten designs. The **Habitat** is a three-layer Ripstop Emphatex model with mosquito mesh and rain flaps for easy access. RRP \$339 (medium size). The **Equinox Hooped Bivvy** has an asymmetric Easton aluminium pole to make the entry larger, a hood for ventilation—even during heavy rain—and a small foot-pole. It weighs 1.2 kilograms. Call **All Geared Up** for stockists, phone (02) 6260 4411. RRP \$395.

Fightin' words

Wilderness Wear products have allegedly averted mutiny in the Amazonian jungle and protected twin geriatric grannies from Antarctic chills. At a time when Australian clothing manufacturing appears to be heading the way of the thylacine, Wilderness Wear's Philip Endersbee has come out swinging.

Not a man to mince words—or, for that matter, to miss a PR opportunity—Endersbee is forthright: 'While most of our competitors

are beating a path to Asia and others suffer from cultural cringe, believing an American brand made in Bangladesh or Sri Lanka is what the market wants, there are still many people who want to be able to buy good-quality, well-priced local products.' And the cause of Endersbee's latest feisty outburst? The man has recently designed, built and equipped his own state-of-the-art, three-factory complex in the Melbourne suburb of Preston. Endersbee swells with pride as he describes Wilderness Wear's 2000 Australian-made stock lines: 'There's nothing like seeing the famous "Kosciuszko" socks being made', he burles. Assuming his family shares his enthusiasm, it must save him a fortune in holiday expenses!

trix

Keeping your
spirits up

Priming Shellite-fuelled
stoves, by Greg Caire

Fuel stoves that run on petroleum-based fuels such as the MSR WhisperLite, Dragonfly, XG-K and the various Coleman and Primus models are best primed with methylated spirits or isopropyl alcohol rather than petroleum-based fuels. Shellite and kerosene tend to leave a thick, sooty residue which can lead to fuel-jet blockages. The alcohol can be carried in a small squeeze bottle. These usually come with a tiny folding spout in the lid, which makes dispensing simple. You can pour the priming fluid either into the priming cup on the stove or squirt it directly into the burner and prime as usual. The reduced jet blockages will make you a much happier camper.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

Yet more headtorches

Recently there seems to have been a glut of new **headtorch** models and two new brands have reached Australian shops.

Silva, a Swedish company founded in 1932, is probably best known for its compasses. It also has a range of high-powered headtorches suitable for professional use. Now it has developed the **M-series**, a range of headtorches for outdoors and recreational use. The M1 has three LEDs and one four-watt halogen globe. By switching between globe types you can use the longer-lasting LED globes (which have a burn time of about 100 hours) or the longer-range halogen globe (which has a burn time of about 1 hour and 45 minutes). The M1 uses NiMH rechargeable batteries—the charger is included when you buy the torch. The M2 has three LEDs and a 2.4-watt halogen lamp. The M3 has a 2.4-watt krypton halogen globe, which has a burn time of about 2.5 hours. Distributed by **Macson Trading Pty Ltd**, phone (03) 9489 9766. M1, RRP \$185; M2, RRP \$99; M3, RRP \$62.



TSL Noyx headtorch.

TSL Sport Equipment is a French company that specialises in snow shoes. Its range of headtorches includes the **Noyx**, a lightweight LED model. It weighs 62 grams (without the three AAA batteries required to power it) and has three LED bulbs with 'HLI'—high LED intensity—power supply. TSL tells us that HLI provides 50 per cent more lighting power than a standard LED. It has a 20 metre range and a functional burn time of about 70 hours. TSL is distributed by **Anso**, phone (03) 9471 1500. RRP \$70.

Dream on!

The founder of **Roman Sleeping Bags** has been quoted as saying that: 'Our customer is searching for a bag no larger than a box of matches, comfortable at temperatures ranging from 15°C to -10°C, as light as a feather and costing no more than \$10.' In pursuit of bushwalking Utopia, Roman introduced its **Palm** series of lightweight and extremely compact sleeping bags some time ago. A full-length zip has seemed incompatible with such a compact bag but the **Palm III** is said to weigh as little as 700 grams. Needless to say, it's not for Mt Everest! Call (02) 9516 5150 for stockists. RRP \$119.

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For more information on the Schrade i-Quit or other Schrade products, call Sheldon and Hammond on 1800 209 999 or visit our website: schradeknives.com

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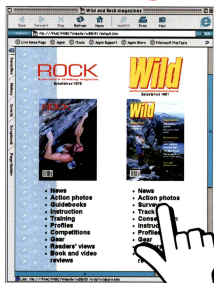
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Pole doubt

Chris Baxter offers
further thoughts on
trekking poles

Davo Blair's article 'Polarity' in *Wild* no 84 was a generally positive and enthusiastic appraisal of trekking poles—equipment still used by only a small percentage of Australian bushwalkers. However, having subsequently used them on an extended bushwalk in South-west Tasmania I have noted that there appear to be more points against them than were discussed in Blair's article.

Most poles are supplied with protective rubber caps which can be removed to reveal sharp metal points. These caps come off very easily—with little hope of being found—as I discovered on entering one of the first Tasmania's notorious bogs which I encountered on my walk. Indeed, on one occasion I lost the entire 'business end' (the push-on section comprising the point and the basket) of a pole and found it only after a careful search of the offending clump of button grass. Another walker in the party had similar problems as well as breakages with his (different brand of) poles.

If you fail to keep a safe distance from other walkers in your party, you run the risk of doing more serious damage than 'jabbing your mate in the back of the leg'. On steep ground you could easily poke them in the eye with a sharp steel pole tip, resulting in blindness, or worse. Similarly, on steep and rough ground it is not difficult to imagine how you might stumble and do yourself serious harm with a wayward pole tip.

Trekking poles may offer some benefits to the environment but it's 'not all roses' here, either, as Trevor Grigson's letter in *Wildfire* in *Wild* no 85 suggests. I would have to concur. On narrow tracks pole tips are placed in the ground on either side, where they certainly leave their mark—literally—regardless of the type of terrain.

Poles catching in vegetation is one of the biggest drawbacks to their use in the Australian bush. Few poles would not be improved by having smaller and more streamlined baskets and, particularly, baskets without holes in them for scrub to catch in.

Trekking poles have their place and are particularly useful if you have problems with your knees or back but, as Blair says, they are not for everyone. They require further refinement to cope with Australian conditions and then they need to be used with regard to the welfare of the environment, other walkers and yourself.

Snail on the trail

Issue number one of *Wild* (1981) included an Equipment section similar to this one which featured a product called 'the Packbed'. The Packbed was a combination rucksack and camp stretcher and the deluxe model even had a small tent shelter. We don't recall seeing too many Packbeds out there on the track but after all those years the Packbed finally has a competitor. The **Snail** is a **combination rucksack and tent**: flexible poles from the two-person dome tent make up the internal frame of the pack. The pack is available in two models (travel- or hybrid pack) and two sizes in each model (sizes range from 65 to 90 litres). The total weight of the pack and tent is about 4.5 kilograms.

The Snail is manufactured by **Black Wolf**, Phone (02) 9667 0899 for stockists. RRP \$299.

Roll over, Packbed, the Snail has arrived in town.



Knick-Knacks

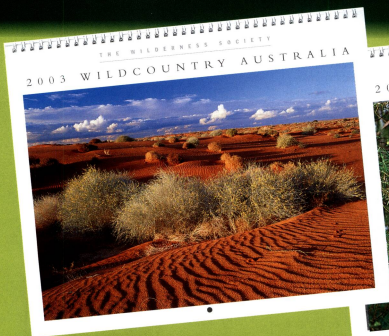
* **Pitch Black**, a new Australian manufacturer of waterproof rucksacks, is extending its range. It has introduced a number of supplementary items such as waterproof map cases, waterproof duffle bags and day packs. Call Pitch Black on (03) 5134 8889 for stockists.

* The popular guide to global positioning systems, **Exploring GPS**, published by **Land and Property Information**, New South Wales, has been revised. Among other things, the new edition includes further advice on buying a GPS.

* **Globetag**, the major sponsor of the recent Ice Trek expedition to the North Pole, is an Internet-based **retrieval system for lost property**: you buy a series of tags which attach to your bags. If you lose your bag, the person who finds it can hop on the Internet and get in touch using your code. The finder receives a free Globetag kit. Available from **Kath-mandu** shops. RRP \$24.95.

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrnan, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: wild@wild.com.au

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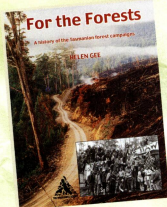
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Published by The Wilderness Society, *For the Forests* is a lavishly illustrated, 408-page record of the peaceful direct actions that became household words around Australia: Jackeys Marsh, The Lemonthyme, Farmhouse Creek, Wesley Vale, The Tarkine, Mother Cummings...

This is oral history at its best, with more than 100 activists, artists and concerned citizens telling the people's story with a fresh and graphic candour. Editor Helen Gee and designer Marie Robb have spent more than three years honing the yarns and the memorabilia into a comprehensive and inspiring volume. The result is a resource of stories and strategies, with a message for the young and the daring, as well as for those in boardrooms and governments around the world. *For the Forests* has a chronology, bibliography and index. Measuring 275 x 210 mm, it is section-sewn with head- and tail-bands and has a dust jacket.

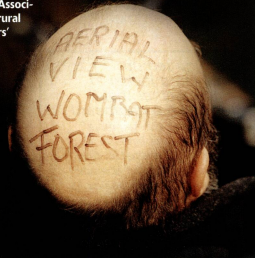
A few individually numbered and personally signed first edition copies are still available at \$79 (inc. GST) plus delivery and handling.

PEOPLE POWER



Scenes from the anti-logging rally in Melbourne in May. Sandy Sheltema

It was a remarkable show of the extent and diversity of community concern about the continued destruction of Australia's old-growth forests. Six thousand people rallied in Melbourne in May to deliver a message to Victoria's pro-logging Labor Government. The rally was organised by the Wilderness Society, Environment Victoria, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Victorian National Parks Association, Friends of the Earth and 15 rural environmental groups. 'Headliners' at the rally included David Bellamy, Bob Brown, Jill Redwood and the band Killing Heidi. Local activists reported on the plight of forests including those near Portland and the Otways, the box ironbarks of Victoria's Central Highlands, Melbourne's water catchments and East Gippsland. It was an articulate and inspiring call to our elected leaders to come to their senses.



Coastal controversy or green blessing?

Plans to build wind farms on the wind-rich coast of Victoria have sparked a series of heated debates in coastal communities, as reported in the *Melbourne Age* on 8 July. Among the concerns expressed by local people are that the visual impact of the turbines may devalue neighbouring land and detract from the popularity of the respective areas as tourist destinations. The effect of the turbines on the habitat of various endangered species, particularly birds, is also a concern.

Wind generation is an appealing form of energy as it doesn't pollute the atmosphere like Victoria's main energy source—finite coal. Codrington wind farm at Portland Bay on

the west coast of Victoria has 14 turbines and its output is around 18 megawatts—enough to power a city the size of Warramboul. The 'clean' energy produced at Codrington farm is equivalent to removing 20 000 cars from the road for a year as about 88 000 fewer tonnes of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere. Wind farms are planned for Portland district, Nirranda and Point Lonsdale to the west and inland at Ararat. To the east, they are planned for Wonthaggi and Tarwin Lower. Toora, also on the east coast, already has eight turbines operating on a site which looks out to Corner Inlet and Wilsons Promontory.

Underground secrets

In their efforts to log right to the boundaries of the South-west Tasmanian World Heritage Area at Blakes Opening, Forestry Tasmania has unearthed caves in the Picton valley. The presence of these caves has been known for at least 18 months and there has been a complete geological survey of the area. The caves have also been surveyed by cavers who have sworn secrecy agreements with Forestry Tasmania. Because Forestry Tasmania is specifically exempt from Freedom of Information legislation none of this information is in the public domain. Cavers are disappointed that the information is unavailable to the caving fraternity through the Australian Speleological Federation or local caving clubs, the stated aims of which are to document, survey and map caves as well as to conduct scientific studies and manage the caves. Rumours have it that Forestry Tasmania wants to manage them as 'wilderness caves', hence the secrecy; other rumours have it that the caves are even better than Newdegate Cave (Hastings Tourist Cave) and that they may be developed for multiple use. The main cave in the area isn't suitable for development as a tourist cave but it is certainly worth preserving. A coupe scheduled for logging this summer is within 20 metres of one of its entrances. Logging would have a severe impact upon the cave and its surrounds. All that would remain in the 'streamside reserve' would be a few man-fems and other understorey species.

It is unfortunate that Forestry Tasmania has not made the cave surveys available, nor consulted with the caving community to seek its advice regarding the management of the caves. Cavers would like the area preserved whereas Forestry Tasmania is keen to maximise its wood production and it is possible that the caves will be lost.

Stephen Bunton

The greening of the Catholic Church

Australia's powerful Catholic Church has signalled its intention to mobilise its congregation—representing a quarter of the Australian population—on environmental issues such as land clearing, the logging of old-growth forests and the protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

In January 2001 Pope John Paul II passionately decried human impacts on the environment and called for an 'ecological conversion'. In response to the Pope's encouragement, Catholic Earthcare Australia was launched

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in early July. The chair of the Bishops Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace, John Bathersby, said that the aim of the initiative is 'to mobilise Australia's five million Catholics to take decisive action to protect the natural world before it's too late'.

Christine Milne, former parliamentary leader of the Tasmanian Greens—and member of an advisory committee on the initiative—believes that the political impact of the Catholic Church on environmental issues should not be underestimated. 'There are still large numbers of politicians in Australia that come from the Irish Catholic tradition and the Church increasing its role in the environment will really be putting the political process in Australia on notice that the mainstream wants change', she said.

Bob Burton

Forgotten forests

Opportunities to achieve significant, landscape-wide conservation gains are relatively rare. Mostly it's a grim slog to influence unresponsive governments or corporations. *Wild* readers are encouraged to contribute a major win for the environment by writing a letter.

Central- and north-eastern Victoria's box-ironbark forests are sometimes referred to as 'the forgotten forests' because they are frequently overlooked when it comes to conservation campaigns. However, ecologically they are very important. Only 17 per cent of the original forests remain after extensive long-term clearing, yet few of the remaining forests are protected.

During the spring Victorian State parliamentary session the fate of the remaining box ironbarks will be debated. The government will need a lot of convincing in the face of intensive lobbying by timber and mining interests. The parks and the threatened species that live in them will live or die depending on how many letters arrive in their support. Politicians need to know that protecting box ironbark is popular and you have the power to persuade them.

Jason Doyle

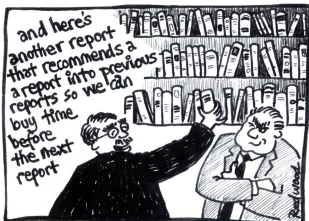
▲ Act now

Write to Premier Steve Bracks and Opposition leader Robert Doyle (both c/- Parliament House, Spring St, Melbourne, Vic 3000) as well as to your local Members of Parliament.

Wood-chips

• The joint owners of the **Ranger uranium mine** in the Northern Territory have been threatened with restrictions after it was revealed that there has been a **new leak of contaminated water** from the mine, reported the *Age* on 25 April. Inside sources say that the leak didn't pose a serious environmental threat but that jobs were lost because the major shareholder in the mine, Rio Tinto, aims to present a spotless environmental record for the day it wishes to mine Jabuluka.

'Dracula in charge of the blood bank'



The State of Victoria has released a 'discussion paper' detailing its management strategies for Victorian alpine resorts until the year 2020. The paper is the work of the Victorian Department of Natural Resources & Environment and was produced with the assistance of the CSIRO and the councils and management boards of the six Victorian alpine resorts. The paper is very pretty and it conveys the DNRE's understanding of the issues and problems facing alpine regions at present and in the next few decades. As it should. However, it is troubling that despite the key indicators of environmental awareness and understanding reflected in this report, one half of the DNRE is responsible for managing the environment of the mountain pygmy possum and the other, for poisoning it after its habitat has been logged, wood-chipped and burnt. As EV campaigner Darren Gladman pointed out in the March issue of *EVnews*, the arrangement by which the DNRE runs the operation, sets the policies and ostensibly regulates itself, is rather like 'Dracula in charge of the blood bank'. The contradictory roles played by this department nullify the positive impact of many of its environmental management strategies—they begin to look like a greenwash. It seems futile to talk about alpine resort management when 20 years from now there may not be any snow.

'Lake Pedder will rise again, pink dawn of the Green Renaissance'

The quote above was sent by the irrepressible David Bellamy as a contribution to a time capsule which was lowered into the waters of the Huon-Serpentine impoundment in South-west Tasmania in April. The time capsule now rests on the beach of the original Lake Pedder—some 12 metres below the surface of the impoundment—awaiting rediscovery.

The submersion of the time capsule and a commemorative walk on 27–28 April marked 30 years since Lake Pedder was flooded. On a cold and drizzly evening Adam Beeson, Stephen Curtain, Barnaby Hume, Lucy Monie and Melanie Smart met Annabel and Roger Richards in Maydena. Melva Truchanas and Jeanette Hyland joined the group later.

A large number of 'Messages to the Future'—numbering in the hundreds, from the flooded lake's many supporters—were sealed in a watertight tube and then put into a handcrafted jarrah box. The capsule contained contributions from HRH Prince Philip, Bob Brown, Liz Dombrowskis, Max Angus, David Bellamy, *Wild* co-founders Brian Walters and Chris Baxter, the David Suzuki Foundation and Melva Truchanas.

Jim Morphet, Roger Richards, Gabi Mocatta and a hired diver proceeded across the impoundment in an inflatable craft to a position above the beach of the original Lake Pedder near the former outlet of Maria Creek. The capsule was left on the beach until Pedder is restored.

Pedder 2000 (Tasmanian and Victorian branches)

Melanie Smart, left, Adam Beeson, Stephen Curtain, Lucy Monie and Barnaby Hume at the Huon-Serpentine impoundment, South-west Tasmania. Curtain



- The *Potoroo Review* reported in its winter issue that in early 2001 the **Japanese Consumer Union**, which represents about 30 million people in Japan, wrote to the Premiers of Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales requesting an **end to the supply of Australian native-forest wood-chips** to Japanese pulp and paper companies.
- In its July issue the *New Internationalist* reported that the new **Costa Rican** President Abel Pacheco de la Esperiella has announced that his country would constitutionally embrace 'absolute **protection for primary forests** so that not a single tree there is cut...our rich biodiversity will always be a great wealth and we will preserve it'.
- Recent **Victorian legislation** protects **13 new marine National Parks**—the first system of marine parks in the world—reported the VNPA in its July newsletter. The benefits of the new National Parks extend beyond the boundaries of science, education and conservation. Tourism, fisheries and regional economies all stand to benefit from the new parks says VNPA marine campaign officer Chris Smyth.
- This is the **Century for Restoring the Earth**, so get involved! Conservationist Helen Gee has recently returned from the 'Restore the Earth' conference at Findhorn in Scotland; she urges readers to participate. See www.treesforlife.org.uk, www.restore-earth.org and www.positive-news.org.uk
- Unintentional **damage to indigenous heritage places** as a result of planning and development decisions should be greatly reduced with the help of a new publication, *Ask First: A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values*. For more information or to request a copy, phone 1800 020 652.
- The **Discovery Channel** has allegedly signed a deal with the **Australian Museum** for exclusive broadcast rights to the projected cloning of the **Tasmanian tiger**. 

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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Beyond the Horizon

by Robert Rankin (Rankin Publishers, 2002, RRP \$49.95).

An unusual one, this: part the author's personal bush reminiscences; part coffee-table, wilderness-photo extravaganza and part (Aboriginal, early European and bushwalking) history. In effect, *Beyond the Horizon* is three books in one. It's certainly different from Rankin's previous offerings and maintains the same high production standards.

The first section, 'The Journey', describes some ten bush trips ('runs') Rankin has done, many unaccompanied, in areas from south-east Queensland to Tasmania's Southwest. An appendix provides detailed itineraries and times.

'The Landscape' section comprises mostly excellent colour photos of three wilderness areas of south-east Queensland and one each in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

'The Background' section comprises selected historical material about the six areas covered earlier in the book. This is strongest when Rankin describes his home turf, south-east Queensland. He has also sourced some interesting information and monotone photos. However, in some of the other areas he is rather selective and revisits some old ground—even then drawing a pretty long bow. The Western Arthurs section, for example, includes items on 'Lake Pedder Lost' and 'The Franklin Saved'.

Beyond the Horizon, despite (or perhaps because of) its foibles, goes beyond the ordinary and makes a contribution to Australian bushwalking literature.

Chris Baxter

Forests of Ash

by Tom Griffiths (Cambridge University Press, 2001, RRP \$34.95).

The mountain-ash forests east of Melbourne grow very tall. And they burn big.

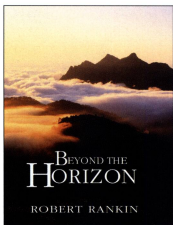
From the Aboriginal inhabitants to the miners, the loggers and the tourists, there has been a range of human interactions with these forests and now they are the focus of major confrontation as environmentalists seek to prevent them from being clear-felled.

Forests of Ash, an Environmental History is full of surprising information including details of the Australian 'Walden' established in the Olinda Creek valley by three young nature lovers who called themselves 'the Woodlanders' and recorded with camera and pen the wildlife of the area. It describes the work of Tom Tregellas, who set himself up

in a large, hollow log in a forest near Kallista where, during 18 years, he set about obtaining a comprehensive photographic record of the lyre-bird.

There are good accounts of miners, engineers and of information coming to light on the long-term cost of logging. Griffiths's account of the many broken promises to Aborigines in the area when commercial interests sought to take over Aboriginal holdings has many modern resonances. Bushfires form the framework for this account as they do for the nature of these forests today.

At times the author is too cautiously 'middle of the road' but there is a great deal for bush lovers in *Forests of Ash*.
Brian Walters



Walking on Eyre

by Terry Krieg (published by the author, 2002, RRP \$22.95).

On 1 July 1982 Warren Bonython and Terry Krieg set out from a base camp near Muloorina Station to make the first 'circumnavigation' of Lake Eyre. Some 33 days and 530 hard-slogging kilometres later they completed their mission. Not surprisingly, Krieg's account makes much of their punishing schedule. Here is a book that you can judge by its cover: the photo of both men straining forward under large rucksacks and hauling two-wheeled carts laden with water and gear underscores the main thrust of the story.

Two aspects lift the book above this daily grind. First, the feeling of shared humility in meeting the challenge of such a place and, secondly, Krieg's deepening respect for the skills and fortitude of his companion. Thus the journey is more than a remarkable feat of endurance by the then 65-year-old Bonython—it also stands as a testament to his 'oneness' with the desert and a lifelong fascination with Lake Eyre itself.

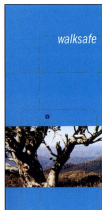
Quentin Chester

Walksafe

(VicWalk, 2002, free with a stamped, self-addressed DL-sized envelope from VicWalk, 332 Banyule Rd, Viewbank, Vic 3084).

Simple, attractive and informative, this handy-sized booklet is a repository of practical and accessible advice on avoiding trouble in the bush. It will be of value to novices and to those leading them.

CB



Orienteering

by Ian Bratt (New Holland, 2002, RRP \$24.95).

On turning the pages you will be excited by the colourful action photographs which illustrate this adrenalin-rich sport. The presentation of *Orienteering: The Essential Guide to Equipment and Techniques* has broad appeal and the text is interesting and informative. The basic navigation skills are set out with easy-to-follow instructions and top-quality graphics—you'll be eager to get out in the field! There's detail on the four orienteering disciplines: foot, mountain bike, ski and trail which are linked to the adventure sports of rogaining and eco-challenges.

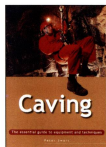
Peta Whitford

Caving

by Peter Swart (New Holland, 2002, RRP \$24.95).

During the last decade there has been a great improvement in both the availability and quality of caving equipment. There has also been a dramatic improvement in the range and quality of technical manuals with modern, full-colour printing. It is good to see a superb guide to modern caving techniques to bring us up to date. *Caving: The Essential Guide to Equipment and Techniques* is wonderfully illustrated with simple diagrams and great photos of products and techniques as well as some inspiring location shots. Unfortunately, not all the photo captions include the name of the place pictured.

Stephen Bunton



GPS Made Easy

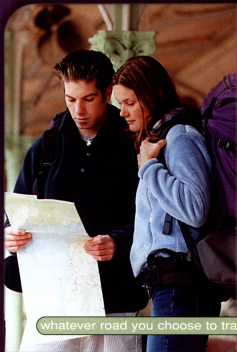
by Lawrence Letham (Cordee, third edition 2002, RRP \$38.95).

A GPS (global positioning system) can be an invaluable part of the navigational tool-box for anyone in the outdoors. Letham explains in very practical terms how to use a GPS on bushwalking and kayaking trips as well as skiing in a white-out. There is also more technical information for those who want to know how the GPS system works.

This book would be very useful to the novice and the experienced outdoors person. 

Gary Tischer

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahara, Vic 3181.



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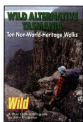
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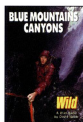
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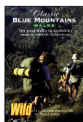
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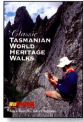
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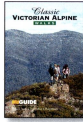
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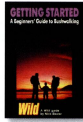
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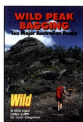
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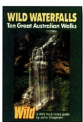
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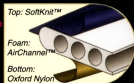
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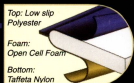


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